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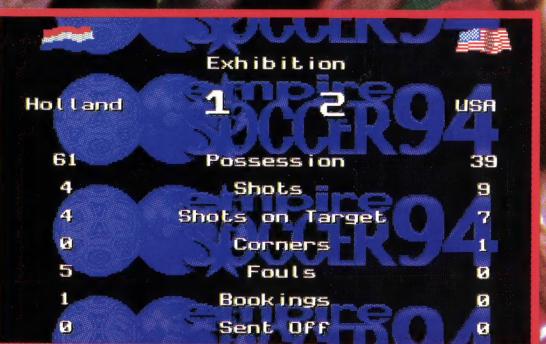
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BBC 2's The Net exposed
Buying a graphics card
First review of The Horde
European Champions
Jon Hare gets angry
Mitch's Fantasy Fair



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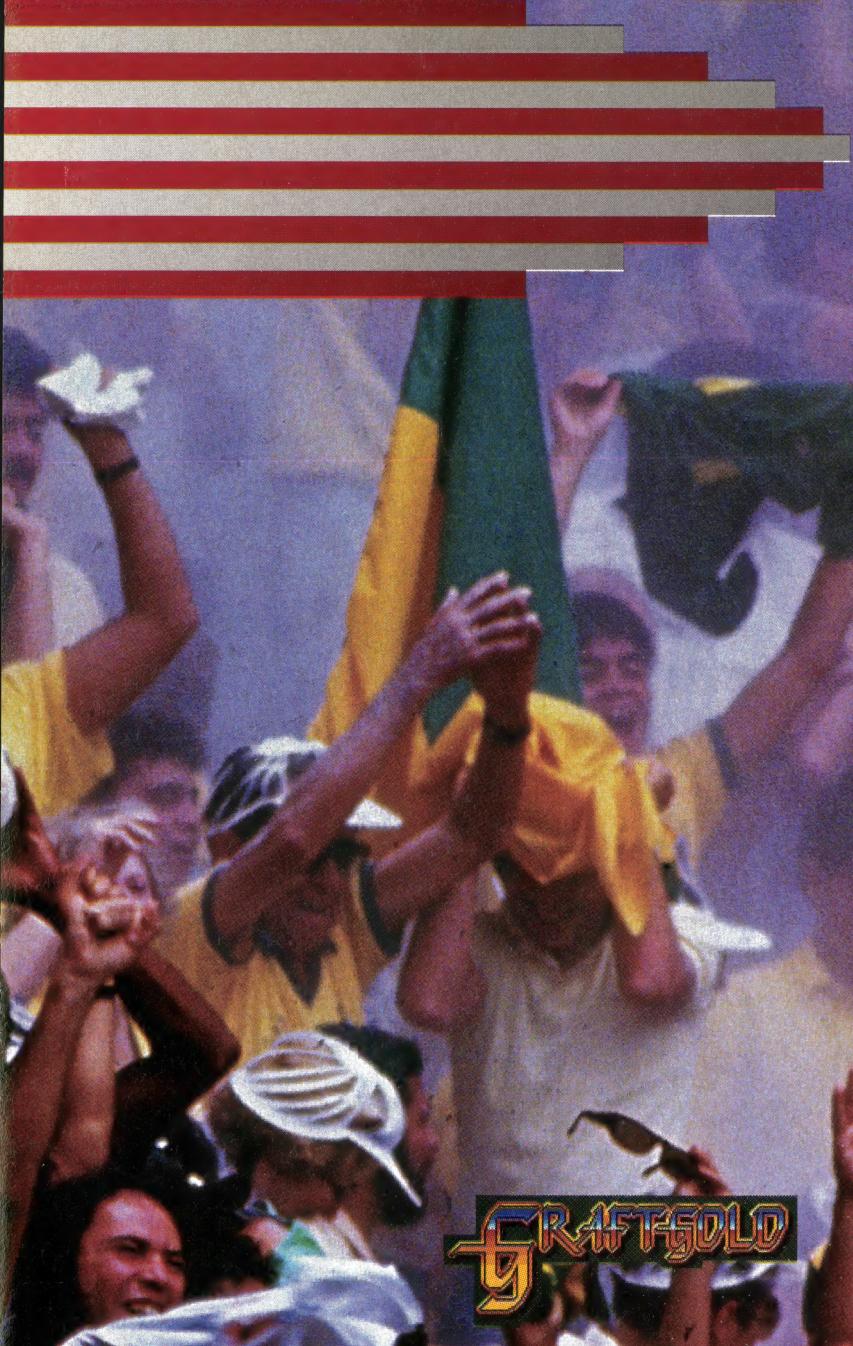


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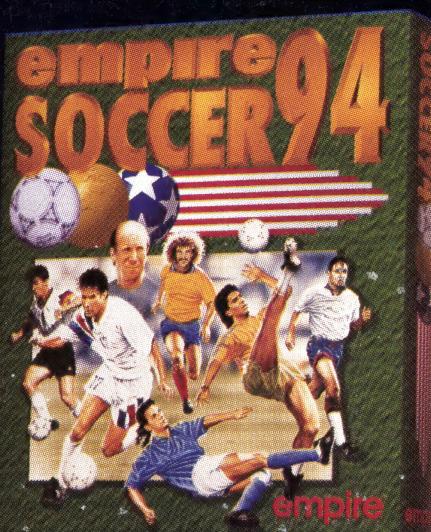
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With special thanks to: Jerry and Mark from Psygnosis, John Hare, Martin Lunn, Illuminations, Jonathan Drori, Stephen Arkell, Virtuality, Howard Rippener, Silicon Graphics, James Morris, Jean Marciel Lefranc, Cryo.

CD issue cover illustration: The stunning *Scavenger IV* from Psygnosis. Rendered on Silicon Graphics with Alias Software.

Mag printed by: Southernprint (Web Offset) Ltd

Newtrade distribution: Seymour International, Windsor House, 1270 London Rd, Norbury, London, SW16 4DH. Tel: 081-679-1899.

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Wanted: Visionaries

Features. I love 'em. Not for what they say, but more for what they make you think about. For example, Kirsten's interview with Jonathan Drori and Stephen Arkell (page 22), the minds behind BBC 2's *The Net*, produced a (hopefully witty and informative) piece answering questions you wanted to ask – Why now? Why here? Why 'The Net'? and Why does Bill Gates look like the shopkeeper in Mr Ben? Yet, as well as leaving me clued-up on the BBC's attitude towards future technology generally, and the PC specifically, it also set me thinking about possible futures.

What, for instance, would instant, immediate, mass communication between 1'000's of individuals

mean to a society like ours? Is the movement towards working from the home a good or bad thing and should we embrace technology or turn our Luddite backs. I don't want answers on a postcard – I want answers in no more than 1,000 words. Visionaries are warmly welcomed on the pages of PC Power – for, although second-guessing the future is part of the computer journalist's role, our myopic attention is always on the specific (RISC vs CISC, etc.) and rarely on the more important general. You, dear reader, can hopefully provide that for us. Dreams to the usual address.

For those of you who want your imagination stretched for you, Dino's piece on Silicon Graphics (page 26) should do the job. These Cyclopean machines sit with a single camera above their monitor. Meetings can be held with fellow beings who are cities, countries and perhaps, one day, worlds away from each other. Up to six people can be displayed on screen at any one time. More importantly, Silicon Graphics workstations really can create believable, alternate worlds – imagine a game actually filled up with the Silicon Graphics-made intros you've seen. Images in VGA a forgotten, hazy nightmare. You're already being fooled into believing in this alternate image. The whole of the studio seen on the BBC's Six O'clock News, including those spotlights, is a pure Silicon Graphics image. The only real things are the desk and the newsreaders (and, sometimes, the news).

Yet the cheapest machine in the Silicon Graphics Indigo range will cost you in excess of £6,000 – way, way, way out of the league of us humble PC folk. The 486 66MHz DX2 is the current state-of-the-art machine in our world (though clock tripling, Pentiums, PowerPCs, custom chips, etc. are pushing us towards another technical revolution and another paradigm shift) but its power and future potency is stunted by the very nature of the self-limiting CISC chip. Our first Angry Young Man feature with Jon "Sensible" Hare (page 38) provides an insight into the developers' intensely frustrating world of technological dead-ends. "I'd like to do away with these shitty machines altogether," he says,

yet he knows he's being Utopian. Whatever the future does hold, at the moment it's still a looking-glass away.

Jon Hare also describes what it's like being an artist in a world that hasn't got to grips with his medium. Society has always been one step behind technology – perhaps because the old rather than the young always hold the balance of power. Victorian, Whitehouse-ian values currently dominate and dictate game content in a way that not even pre-watershed TV would stand for. Being contentious just isn't allowed – the result of tabloid hysteria and subsequent retailer paranoia. "You can't shield people from things. I've got no time for that. No one shields me from Christians burling dangerous inanities every Sunday and if I have to tolerate them, they should tolerate me," rants Jon.

In spite of practical and political barriers, technology continues its inexorable march forward, resulting in some striking effects. Virtual Reality, the stuff of cyber-dreams, is still very much in its infancy and yet the images being produced would amaze even Gibson – with or without neural interfaces. Dino Boni was the PC Power member lucky enough to plug himself into the alternate worlds of *X-treme Strike* and *Virtual Boxing* created by the British-owned Virtuality, the largest developer and manufacturer of VR machines in the world (page 34). On a more down-to-earth level, Paris-based Cryo are the pushy parents of the teething CD-ROM medium. Their latest game is *Dragon Lore*. With 256 colour graphics using both stepped and smooth movement the game will provide an experience far more absorbing than the already dated *7th Guest*, and the oh-so limited *Myst*. John Marciel Lefranc, director of the project, believes CD-ROM is finally coming of age with improved data compression finally realising acceptable multimedia levels. Judging by what we've seen of *Dragon Lore* so far, PC Power wouldn't argue. The most exciting development team in the world hold all of the cards.

The future, then. It's looking pretty good through the haze. The present isn't all bad either, especially when you realise you're looking at it close up – pock marks and wrinkles naked to the eye. Games like *Pacific Strike* and *The Horde* are reasons to be very cheerful. Just ten years ago you wouldn't have believed that they would be possible. Of course there's room for improvement, also. Despite what Jon Hare thinks, it will be a sad day when things can no longer get better. (Especially for us journalists – we might have to get a proper job.) However, even if all change is good and some changes are better than others, for change to be constructive it needs to be channelled. The difficult question is who's going to channel it? Time for the visionaries amongst you to step forward, methinks.

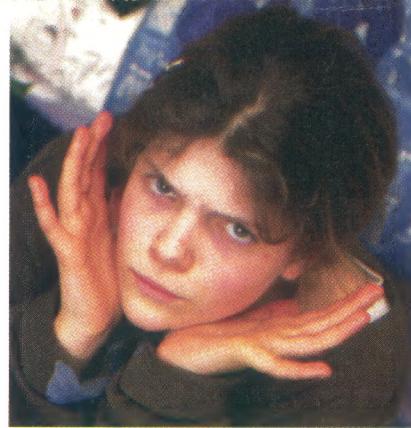
Dave Westley, Editor – PC Power

"Visionaries are welcomed on the pages of PC Power.. Dreams to the usual address."



PAGE **38**

Cover your ears
Maureen, it's that man again! Jon Hare, the Angry Young Man of computer gaming lets rip in the first of a series of free-for-all rants.

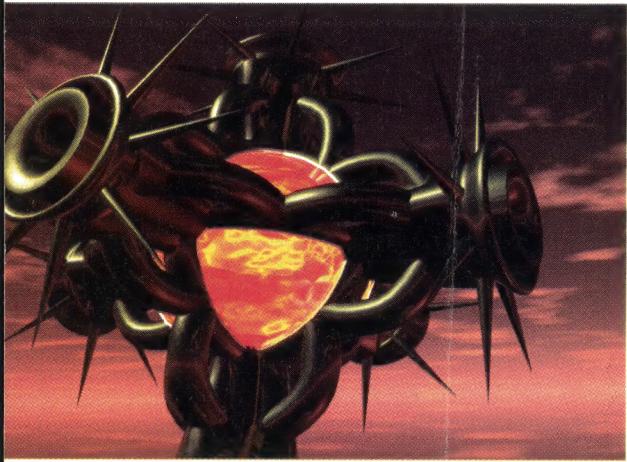


PAGE **22**

Kirsten Foster visits the Birtian corridors of the Beeb and the bijou ambience of Islington to bring you in-depth probes into the creative minds behind *The Net*.

JULY '94 ISSUE 7

R E V I E W S



66 AEGIS

Time Warner's naval battle sim uses Full Motion Video to show off the hardware under your control.

64 BRUTAL FOOTBALL

Blood and gore for all those who think Vinnie Jones is a wuss, and that 'it ain't cheating if the ref doesn't see it!'

76 CORRIDOR 7

Corridor 7 is yet another game using a *Wolfenstein 3-D* type engine. But will it drag Dino away from *Doom*?

54 DETROIT

Follow in the footsteps of Mr. Ford and Herr Benz, make a fortune from your car empire, then lay off all your workers.

52 DRAGON'S LAIR

Dragon's Lair is the bimbo of the CD-ROM world. It looks great, but it's a couple of chips short of a butty.

60 EMPIRE SOCCER

Empire get silly with this very arcade-y footy game. Exclusive review.

72 EUROPEAN CHAMPIONS

It's a football free-for-all in PC-gaming land this summer and Ocean are planning to cash in.

48 THE HORDE

This RPG has the hammiest acting and the looziest, cow-obsessed plot ever seen. We can't get enough of it!

56 PACIFIC STRIKE

Origin come up with the latest in their long line of air-combat sims. It'll test your Yo-Yos and Split-Ss to the limit.

74 SAM & MAX CD

Everyone's favourite psycho rabbit and dog detectives return with 6,000 lines of hilarious digitised dialogue.

68 SPACE HULK

Based on an RPG/board game, *Space Hulk* pits you against a band of Ridley Scott-esque aliens – the Genestealers.

62 SPACESHIP WARLOCK

The smell of pork was rife in the office this month. This is another game which hams it up until the pigs come home.

70 SUMMER/WINTER CHALLENGE

Accolade re-release their popular sports sims on one CD, offering nostalgic, joystick-bashing fun at a bargain price.

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PAGE 26

Dino Boni visits Silicon Graphics' HQ and says 'Wow, look at that!' a lot. Read on for a glimpse at the future and yet one more reason to wish you had thousands of pounds.



PAGE 95

The Fantasy Zone ventures where Southern softies fear to tread - the wilds of Watford, where Mitch experiences sex, violence and model-making at a fantasy fair.

R E G U L A R S

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ELSPA's regulations, EA's supersonic profits, Zool's sex-life and Pearson's ever-expanding multimedia empire.

33 OPINION

Those hoary old hacks Stuart Wynne and Ged Start give you the benefit of their weird and wonderful experience.

95 FANTASY ZONE

Mitch takes a trip around a fantasy fair. It's a veritable feast of cardboard Captain Kirks and Manga models galore.

78 BUDGET

CD-ROM encroaches on budget territory with two fat compilations: *Quest & Fun* and *Battles Of Time*.

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18 GRAPHICS CARDS GUIDE

Tony Kaye sorts out the thoroughbreds from the donkeys in the good, bad and the ugly of graphics cards.

22 THE NET

Kirsten Foster infiltrates the BBC to interrogate the minds behind BBC2's network magazine programme.

26 SILICON GRAPHICS

Dino Boni travels to Wonderland, (AKA Silicon Graphics' HQ) and tries not to drool over the machinery.

30 CRYO-GENIUS

They're French, they're cool and they're making the CD-ROM market their own. David Westley asks 'Comme?'

34 VIRTUAL REALITY

It's life, Jim, but not as we know it. Dino Boni introduces us to the alternative world that is Virtuality.

38 JOHN HARE INTERVIEW

The following pages contain strong language which may offend. Particularly if your name is Mary Whitehouse.

38 THE FAT MAN

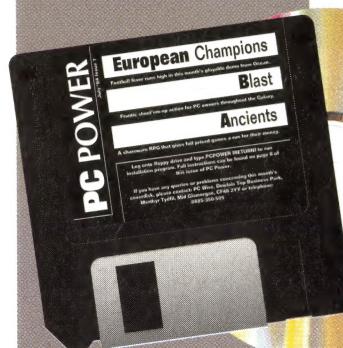
He's not fat but he is a man - the top man of computer gaming music production. Jon Ewing sings along.

E X P O S U R E S

90 WORLD CUP '94

We preview US Gold's official World Cup football sim. It could be better than reality - at least it's got England in it.

This month's coverdisks



PC Power is two once more with PC Power CD and PC Power HD.

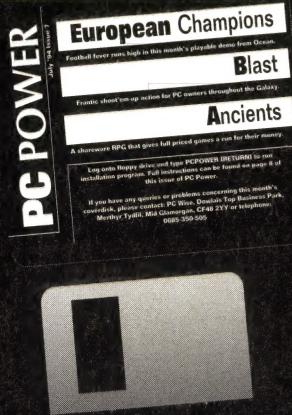
If the spaces for either the compact or floppy disk are empty, then you should speak to your newsagent, immediately. He or she should then be able to give them to you, or replace your magazine.

For more information on these products, please turn to page eight. If you have any problems, page eight has an address where you can send faulty floppy or compact disks to.



TURN TO PAGE 8

Coverdisk



Put the PC Power coverdisk into your floppy drive and type [drive name]:RETURN where [drive name] is the letter of your floppy drive. For example, if your 3.5" floppy drive is called drive 'A', then you would type: A:RETURN Then type PCPOWER:RETURN to run the menu system. This is very easy to use, and is completely automatic. The name of the drive that the programs will be installed into will be displayed. If your hard drive is identified by a different letter, press 'D' followed by your hard drive's letter.

To install any of the programs from the coverdisk, just type the corresponding number next to its name, and the menu program will do the rest!

When you have finished press the 'Escape' key to return to DOS.

EUROPEAN CHAMPIONS

Type of Demo: Playable football sim – one match only
Publisher: Ocean
Telephone: 061-832-6633
Full Game Price: £29.99
Availability: Out Now
Min. Spec: 386SX; 2Mb RAM; VGA

To play the game, install it from the PC Power coverdisk using the menu system, and then change to the game directory by typing

CD [drive name]:ECIRETURN
where [drive name] is the letter of your hard drive. Then



This month's coverdisk contains an exclusive demo of Ocean's new football game, *European Champions*, as well as *Blast*, a great PC shoot'em-up. Enjoy!

type **ECIRETURN** to run the game.

The first thing you see is the Main Menu. For the purposes of this demo, you can just play a friendly match against the computer.

To calibrate your joystick, click on the Options icon in the Main Menu, and then on the Play Options icon. Click on the small icon depicting a joystick labelled 'Control' on the next screen.

Click on the icon labelled 'Joystick One' and follow the on-screen instructions. If you haven't got a joystick, the keyboard controls can be changed from this screen by simply clicking on the key you want to change and pressing the new key on the keyboard.

Go back to the Main Menu using the 'Exit' icons, click on the 'Friendly Match' option with the mouse and then click on the team that you wish to play with. Then select a team to play against. The opposing team does not have to be from the same country as your team. You will then be presented with the Game Options screen. At the top of the screen are the names of the two teams you have selected, and underneath each of them is a line saying 'CPU Controlled'. Click on this line under the name of the team you want to control. It will now read 'Player Controlled', and you're all ready to go.

To start the game, click on the 'Start Game' icon with the mouse. There are two types of pass – the 'Ping Pass' and the 'Point to Pass'.

The Ping Pass is when the computer selects a player who is free from markers. He will be highlighted by a halo above his head. The arrow above the player in control shows the general direction of the receiving player. When you hear a 'Ping', a player has been selected and a quick tap on the fire button will pass the ball to him.

The Point-To-Pass doesn't rely on the computer selecting a receiver for you. When you are running with the ball, centre the joystick (don't worry, the player directly under your control will keep going), press and hold down the fire button. Push the joystick in the direction you wish to pass the ball and the arrow above the passer's head will point accordingly and the pass will be made.

To shoot the ball, push the joystick in the direction of the shot and hold down the fire button. A small crosshair will appear on the pitch and will zoom off in the same direction as the joystick. When the crosshair reaches the point you want to aim at, release the fire button and the ball will be kicked towards that point.

If you push the joystick forward when you release the fire button, the ball will travel along the ground. Similarly, if you pull the joystick back, then the ball will be lifted into the air. The same idea applies for left and right directions.

When you haven't got the ball, simply press the fire button to perform a sliding tackle.

When the game finishes, the computer will lock up and you will need to reset the whole machine to get control back. Press the reset switch on your PC to do this.

ANCIENTS

Type of Demo: Fully playable, shareware, RPG game
Publisher: Cygnus Software
Registration Fee: \$15.00
Min. Spec: 386SX; 640K RAM; VGA

You control a party of brave warriors and priests who must track down the source of a new evil that has begun to plague your land.

Once the game is installed on your hard drive, change to the game directory by typing

CD [drive name]:ANCIENTS:RETURN
where [drive name] is the letter of your hard drive. For example, if your hard drive is called 'C', then you would type

CD C:ANCIENTS:RETURN

Now type **BEGIN:RETURN** to start the game.

All the relevant information and instructions for this game can be found in the file 'MANUAL.DOC' in the game directory. To read this, type

EDIT [drive name]:ANCIENTS\MANUAL.DOC
[RETURN] where (as always) [drive name] is the letter of your hard disk drive.

WINDOWS CROSSWORD

Type of Demo: Limited-play, crossword game.

Publisher: Word Games for Windows

Telephone: 0702-468-029

Full Game Price: £29.99

Availability: Out Now

Min. Spec: 386SX; 1Mb RAM; VGA; mouse; Windows

This demo version features a few crosswords from The Daily Telegraph to get you going, while the full version has over 200 to choose from, including 'quick' and 'cryptic' versions.

This game will be installed by the menu on to a directory on your hard drive called 'WINXWORD', but you have to finish the installation of this game yourself.

After partial installation you will return to DOS. Start Windows, click on the File Manager icon and change the directory to the 'WINXWORD' directory. Now double click on the 'SETUP.EXE' program in the directory, and the rest of the installation is automatic.

BLAST

Type of Demo: Shareware shoot'em-up

Publisher: Cyberware

Registration Fee: £15.00

Telephone: 0902-23424

Min. Spec: 386SX; 2Mb RAM; VGA

Once the game is installed on your hard drive, change to the game directory by typing

CD [drive name]:BLAST:RETURN

where [drive name] is the letter of your hard drive. For example, if your hard drive is called 'C', you would type **CD C:BLAST:RETURN**. Now type **BLAST** [RETURN] to start the game.

Blast is a simple, yet addictive, horizontal-scrolling shoot'em-up. All of the usual power-ups, aliens and destructive weapons are present in this fun game. It can be played by using a joystick or the keyboard and full instructions are included with the game.

Faulty disk?

If you have any problems with your coverdisk, then please send it to: PC WISE, Dowlais Top Business Park, Merthyr Tydfil, Mid Glamorgan, CF48 277, or telephone 0685-350-505. PC Power, our suppliers and distributors, cannot be held legally responsible for any faulty disk. In addition, although our coverdisks are thoroughly checked, we cannot be held legally responsible for any virus found.



CoverCD

For the last month, we've been putting together yet another fantastic CD-ROM demo collection for you to enjoy. Boot up your PC, insert the CD into your hungry CD-ROM drive, and marvel at the sheer quality of this month's offerings.

INSTRUCTIONS

Insert the CD into your CD-ROM drive and from your DOS prompt, type the following to log onto your CD drive:

[drive name]:[return]
where [drive name] is the letter of your CD-ROM drive. For instance, if your CD drive is called drive 'D', then you would type
D:[return]

Once you're logged onto your CD drive, type PCPOWER[return] to start the CD menu system.

As you can see, we've introduced a simple and easy to use menu program that will run or install all of the programs without the need for troublesome batch files. To run a demo, simply highlight its name using the cursor keys and press [return] to run it. If the demo requires installation to your hard drive, the program will prompt you before it does anything. Easy, eh?

European Champions

Type of Demo: Limited play
Publisher: Ocean
Telephone: 061-832-6633
Full Game Price: £29.99
Availability: Out Now
Min. Spec: 386SX; 2Mb RAM; VGA; mouse

European Champions centres around the European Cup, where all the best teams throughout Europe battle it out for one of the most coveted trophies in football today. For full instructions on how to play this game, see the floppy coverdisk pages in this issue of PC Power.



Super Hero League of Hoboken



Type of Demo: Non-playable
Publisher: Accolade
Telephone: 081-877-0880
Full Game Price: £39.99
Availability: July
Min. Spec: 386SX; 2Mb RAM; VGA

The Earth has been laid to waste by nuclear war, toxic pollution and a shortage of oat bran. Strange, comical mutations roam the dusty earth, striking terror into the hearts of every other living thing. Experience this point-'n'-click graphic adventure even before the full game is finished!

Detroit



Type of Demo: Playable
Publisher: Impressions
Telephone: 071-351-2133
Full Game Price: £39.99
Availability: Out Now
Min. Spec: 286 or above; 640K RAM; mouse

Design a prototype, test it out on the test circuit and if it's good enough, market and sell it. Sounds easy? All sorts of obstacles stand in your way. You start in the year 1908 you can look forward to the Oil Crisis and the Great Depression. You'll have to battle your way through these slumps in sales and you'll also have to develop more and more exciting cars to stimulate the population's buying interest.

Heimdall 2

Type of Demo: Playable
Publisher: Core Design
Telephone: 0332-297-797
Full Game Price: £39.99
Availability: June
Min. Spec: 286; 640K RAM; VGA; mouse

Hheimdall was originally released on the Amiga a few years ago. It was a strange mix of strategy, arcade action and adventure all centred around a small Viking warrior named Heimdall. Core Design have now produced a second game based around this horny-helmeted warrior and have introduced a second, female character. Move them both through this 3-D isometric adventure.

NON PLAYABLE

Darkseed

Type of Demo: Limited play
Publisher: Cyberdreams
Telephone: 071-328-3267
Full Game Price: £44.99
Availability: Out Now
Min. Spec: 286; 20MHz; 640K RAM; VGA; CD-ROM; mouse

You play the role of Mike Dawson in this point-'n'-click graphical adventure. Mike is a sci-fi writer who has just purchased an old Victorian house in a sleepy, American town. When you move in, you're suddenly overcome by a powerful feeling of tiredness. Stumbling into the bedroom, you lie down and promptly fall asleep.

You have a nightmare while you're asleep – strange bio-mechanical arms and instruments are putting something inside your brain – some sort of embryo...

Red Hell

Type of Demo: Limited play
Publisher: Cyberdreams
Telephone: 071-328-3267
Full Game Price: £39.99
Availability: Out Now
Min. Spec: 386SX; 4Mb RAM; VGA; mouse

In this point-'n'-click graphical adventure, you must help Mark Constantine free the world from the Soviet tyranny and save your son who has been dubbed a dangerous dissident.

Movement through this alternate world is simple – when has a point-'n'-click interface ever not been? There are only four icons to access at any one time situated at the bottom of the screen: talk, walk, look at and use. Click once on the icon, and then a second time over the object of interest.

Blast

Type of Demo: Shareware
Publisher: Cyberware
Telephone: 0902-23424
Min. Spec: 386SX; 2Mb RAM; VGA

CD-ROM Premiere

Type of Demo: Limited play
Publisher: Time Warner Interactive
Telephone: 0604-790-785
Full Game Price: n/a
Availability: n/a
Min. Spec: 386SX; 4Mb RAM; VGA; CD-ROM; mouse; Windows 3.1 or 3.11

CD-ROM Premiere is Time Warner's product sampler. Time Warner Interactive are becoming the name in interactive entertainment and this demo shows you why. There are 10 superb demos to try – far too many to fit onto this page. You'll just have to load them yourself – far more exciting!

Demos included: Hell Cab, Funny, Murmurs Of Earth, Desert Storm, Word Tales and Clinton.



Megarace

Type of Demo: One track
Publisher: Mindscape
Telephone: 0444-246-333
Full Game Price: £39.99
Availability: Out Now
Min. Spec: 386SX; 4Mb RAM; VGA; mouse

Cryo's visually stunning arcade race game burst into PC Power way back in issue four. Autodesk's 3D Studio has never been better used with a different rendered backdrop for each track. In one it seems as though you're speeding through the centre of a wave, in another the lights of a city stand out like stars above a city at sleep.

Megarace is a game within a game. You're a contestant in a virtual TV show. To win, not only do you have to finish first but you also have to cause the most carnage, shooting and barging contestants as you go. The twist is that you're not really racing. This is a virtual world and you're playing from a TV studio.

Ammunition and fuel have to be collected as you go. You're certain to lose if you fail to collect the right power-ups.

Space Hulk CD

Type of Demo: Limited play
Publisher: Electronic Arts
Telephone: 0753-549-442
Full Game Price: £39.99
Availability: July
Min. Spec: 386SX; 4Mb RAM; CD-ROM; mouse

Set thousands of years into the future, mankind has created an inter-galactic empire. A race of creatures called the Genestealers use discarded battleships – Space Hulks – as transport, descending onto worlds and destroying everything in their path.

You are the commander of a squad of Terminators. These special marines are encased in powerful exo-armour and armed with the best weapons the Imperium has to offer. Using these Terminators, you must board Space Hulks, complete certain missions and hopefully rid the Space Hulk of its Genestealer crew.

MYST



Type of Demo: Limited play
Publisher: Electronic Arts
Telephone: 0753-549-442

Blast is full of the usual power-ups, aliens and super-weapons and can be controlled by either using the keyboard or a joystick. Full instructions are included with this game, but remember, if you find the game useful, then you have to register it with the authors.

Full Game Price: £39.99

Availability: Out Now
Min. Spec: 386DX-33; MS-DOS 5.0 or above; 4Mb RAM; SVGA; CD-ROM drive; mouse

Not only do you get a demo of the game, but we've also included an extra feature that is usually only included in the full-price game. The Making of Myst is a QuickTime for Windows movie that takes you through the development of the game and features interviews with the staff at Cyan.

UFO: Enemy Unknown

Type of Demo: Limited play
Publisher: MicroProse
Telephone: 0454-326-532
Full Game Price: £49.99
Availability: Out Now
Min. Spec: 386SX; 4Mb RAM; CD-ROM; mouse

You are the commander of Xcomm, a world-wide organisation dedicated to foiling an invasion of extra terrestrials. Using your squad of Interceptor aircraft, Skyranger troop-transporters and heavily-armed marines, you must stop the aliens from getting too confident by shooting down the UFOs as they are detected.

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Games News

Sock it to me

At this month's ECTS, software giant Electronic Arts announced an impressive line up of products to stretch well into 1995. *FIFA International Soccer* is closest to release, with a review copy promised for next month's issue.

Critically and commercially acclaimed on both Sega's Mega Drive and Nintendo's Super NES, *FIFA* was the fastest selling video game of 1993 and the winner of four industry awards. According to Michelle Harris, PR executive at EA, the PC version will be an "even better game" with improved scrolling, a more acute eye for detail and improved player animation (of which there are over 2,000 frames).

Played from a 3/4 style, top-down, isometric perspective, a great deal of the pitch is always in view. The player can choose from over 48 international teams "that look and play like their real life counterparts, each with differing styles and abilities." There are single 'friendly' games, round-robin style tournaments as well as an obligatory full league.

FIFA International Soccer has been designed by a British development team to "ensure that the title is true to the game and its official rules and not a loose interpretation of the game produced by either a Japanese or American Team."



PC Power was fortunate enough to be given access to the game by EA and, judging by the brief minutes of play that we had, this game is neck and neck with US Gold's soccer game in our best footy game stakes. It's more of an arcade experience than *World Cup '94* with less opportunity to take over managerial/coaching options. All effort has been put into in-game adrenaline pumping arcade action and the results look very promising indeed.

Fifa International Soccer will be released "shortly". The price has yet to be decided.

Interactive cinema



EA are on something of a roll. Pacific Strike (page 56) shows what the company can do if allowed to develop on a high-end machine. Two new games, *Bioforge* and *System Shock*, plan to build on that experience. The director of *Bioforge* is Ken Demerit (of *Ultima VII* fame) who hopes to produce the world's first successful 'interactive' movie. "Most people who claim to be making interactive movies," he says, "are really just stringing a series of film clips together. The 'player' ends up watching the protagonist, rather than actually being the protagonist – that won't happen with this game."

The game seems to take its inspiration from *Total Recall*. You awake from an operation to find that you've been transformed into a sophisticated Cyborg, half man and half machine, and that your memory has been totally erased. Your journey

Gremlin's big July game is *Desert Strike*, one of the best selling console titles ever. Subtitled *Return To The Gulf*, the game has you taking control of an Apache attack helicopter to fly into enemy territory in the Middle East. You undertake a series of pre-emptive missions "with the aim of striking at the very heart of the evil Empire".

The view is a 3/4, top-down perspective, with the 256 colour terrain scrolling beneath the player in eight directions. That terrain, incidentally, is composed of tanks, chemical weapon plants, airfields, SCUDS, radar nests, jeeps, etc – objects that move and/or operate in real time.

At this stage, all of the terrain has been built and the Apache can fly around freely, but no element of interaction has been incorporated. "The worst is over, though," said Steve McKevitt, PR Manager, "the rest is just tweaking – everything should be ready by the time of release."

Desert Strike's price is set at £39.99.



to rediscover your soul will pit you against hostile, morphing aliens amidst "the unexplored ruins of a long-dead civilisation."

Within the game you are in total control of a fully animated, synthetic actor and can move him through a detailed 3-D world. As the actor moves, the in-built cameras of the game will switch automatically to a variety of angles – not unlike Infogrames' choreographed *Alone In The Dark I* and *II*.

One of the most impressive aspects of the game is the incredible character animation. PC Power asked how it had been achieved. "This is one of the most complex topics, so excuse me if I simplify it a little bit. We start out with a pretty rough polygonal mesh. Then we take that rough polygonal mesh and draw the most lifelike, beautiful picture we can on top of it. In order to do that we build a very complex mesh

in 3D Studio, render it out and take pictures of the renders and kind of paint it onto that very simplified mesh. The reason we use that simplified mesh is for speed purposes. It's very difficult to use that many triangles all at once and still have a semblance of real time. So we use those painting techniques to give the impression of rendering on the fly..."

Once we've got the skin, then we need to build a skeleton which we attach to various points on its surface, and, as soon as they're attached, wherever the skeleton moves, the associated parts of the skin move also..."

This admirable attention to detail is also being extended into that most important of areas, the gameplay. EA have assured us that when this game does make it to the shops, it's going to alter our perceptions of what a game can do. Roll on September.

EA disappointed by Europe

Electronic Arts continue to grow at an exponential rate, with the best sales figure yet recorded for one financial year. 1994 saw the company top the \$400 million mark, way above last year's \$283 million sales figure. Actual profits also grew by a hefty 45% to \$47 million.

Most of the growth came from the US (26%) and Japan (140%). European sales actually dropped by 13% – a figure attributed to the continuing weakness in the video games cartridge market.

Self-regulation

ELSPA's protracted debate over the substance of the classification system has finally ended with a scheme that has, so far, met with the lukewarm approval of software publishers. The system will be European-wide and one major retailer, Future Zone, has already promised not to stock products without the classification.

"Publishers have got a window of three months. After August 1st we're taking no product unless it's correctly labelled," offered Tony Pickup, MD at the company. "We're looking to every other retailer to join forces with us and make this thing happen. We're calling on people to be responsible about this industry... If a lot more firms aren't in line by August then you can forget the scheme and start looking forward to the government telling us what to do."

There are said to be 62 forthcoming titles which will follow the ELSPA guidelines. The system works by ticking a number of categories: 3-10; 11-14; 15-17 and 18+. The main opposition comes from those publishers who want a world-wide system, based on the outcome of the American discussions on regulation.

The latest publisher to agree to the system is Nintendo. ELSPA see their co-operation as something of a stepping stone to other publishers following suit. Roger Bennet, General Secretary at ELSPA has said "We are very aware of Nintendo's stringent internal guidelines on video and computer game content and we are delighted that they have joined the scheme. Nintendo's acceptance of the industry's need for self-regulation illustrates the

importance of the rating system. It is particularly needed for those who are unfamiliar with both the nature and the content of interactive entertainment."



Pearsons in world take-over bid

Not content with the £310 million Pearsons have just spent on The Software Toolworks, the company have now turned their eyes towards the US-owned ITC television company. The real target is said to be ITC's library of 10,000 hours' worth of shows and films – such as The Prisoner and On Golden Pond.

Pearsons already own Thames TV and Penguin Books and this latest addition will make their multimedia future even rosier.

Ever expanding Elite



The Elite universe is about to expand as Gametek follow up the huge success of *Elite II* with *Frontier: The First Encounter*.

Frontier is considered to be an extension of *Elite II*, rather than a whole new game, and is said to be much more complex than its predecessor.

Elite II has now sold over 200,000 units in Europe. It was the top selling game of 1993 according to Gallup and won the Live And Kicking award at April's ECTS. Gametek hope *Frontier* will be able to cash in on this success. Author David Braben has formed a new company called Frontier Development Ltd which will concentrate on further *Frontier* projects.



Activision call in the Demolition Man

On 25th April, Activision achieved what they believe is a bit of a coup. Scriptwriter and producer Peter Lenkov, who is best known for his work on The Demolition Man, signed an agreement to write and produce a new interactive game series. This, as yet untitled, project will entail the creation of an original cyberthemed universe and will include an array of characters and places that can be transferred to other entertainment media such as TV or film..."

"Peter will bring Activision the talent and creative resources needed to create a game universe that can be leveraged into a theatrical release," commented Robert Kotick, Chairman and CEO of the company. "In addition to being a very talented writer, Peter is also a game enthusiast and strengthens Activision's commitment to combining the Hollywood community's top creative talent with the Interactive community's most skilled game developers."

Zool revisited

Gremlin's latest game starring the Ninja From The Nth Dimension (who just happens to look like an ant) is also nearing completion and, according to Steve McEvitt, the company's PR bod, is looking "like it will be the best platform game on the PC, ever."

The *Zool* game engine has apparently been improved upon and now comes with "Super-smooth parallax scrolling, brilliant 256 colour graphics and a brand new Zool sprite, beautifully redrawn especially for this game".

Zool 2 features six new worlds, "choc-full" of goodies to collect and secret rooms to find. There will also be four new characters including Krool, Mental Block, Zoon and Zozz. Zozz is a female Ninja (armed with a whip and ponytail!) and, should you so choose, you can dump Zool and play with her instead.

Zool 2 should be in the shops in time for July.



Elite need space

Following their moderate success with *Dragon's Lair* (see review, page 52), Elite are readying themselves to release *Space Ace*, another Sullivan Bluth conversion being developed by ReadySoft.

Like *Dragon's Lair*, all of the Disney-quality graphics will be ported across from the laser disk original of *Space Ace*, though if you're not lucky enough to own a ReelMagic card, some detail or resolution will unfortunately be lost.

Also in the pipeline is *Powerslide*, a 3-D race game. Being developed by Maelstrom, the game promises to be something very special indeed.



US Gold delay

US Gold have announced that *Delta V*'s release has been put back so that the company can tinker with the gameplay a little. Apparently, there were concerns that the gameplay was a little limited and the trench sequences were over-long. That's being rectified as we go to press and an infinitely improved product is being guaranteed. (Though how much improvement you can get over 90% I don't know...)



On a brighter note, Access' *Under A Killing Moon* is now 80% complete according to Bridgett Hirst, PR Manager at the company, and should be reviewable next issue. Finally, *Dark Legions*, *Al Qadim*, *War Games 2: Tanks* and the excellent *World Cup '94* should also come under the reviewers' scrutiny in our hot and sunny August issue.

Zeppelin - three month round-up



Zeppelin have a whole host of products ready and waiting to be shipped to the hungry masses. First up is *Match Of The Day*, a football management game where the player has to take a struggling Third Division side all the way up to the top of the Premier League. Both PC HD and PC CD-ROM versions of the game will be available from 23rd May.

June sees the release of *Frankenstein*, a frantic platform romp. The player has to guide Egor, Dr Frankenstein's assistant, through a haunted castle, graveyard and castle grounds, searching for scattered pieces of 'the monster'. The game is said to feature all manner of creatures who will stop at nothing to thwart his quest - bogeymen, vampire bats and 'Jack O' Lanterns' (whatever they might be). June also sees the release of *Alex Dampier's Ice Hockey*.

In July, Zeppelin bring out *Wolfsbane*, a point 'n' click arcade adventure starring Axel, a young whippersnapper who must find and conquer a werewolf before it eats all of his fellow villagers. The problem is that the werewolf is actually one of the villagers - though none of them, of course, admit it.

FIST fades yet again

Those of you who can remember back to our first issue will remember the interview PC Power did with Stephen Jackson about the wonderful world of *FIST*. This game is based upon the telephone adventure devised by Jackson which was originally based on sounds rather than images.

The game places the player at the centre of Castle Mammon. He/she must then work his or her way out avoiding the traps set for him by Demon Prince Kaddis-Ra, the Lord of the Undead. On the way there will be plenty of opportunity to stuff gold into his/her pockets, and, of course, to bash demons.

The official deadline is set for June, but, according to sources in the company, that is having to be pushed back to enhance the graphics, sound and gameplay. "This is the big one for Supervision and we're going to make sure that no one is disappointed with it when it does make it into the shops..." Expect a September/October release.



It's show time



Silica have just picked up the licensing rights for the ReelMagic Lite video card. At £292.58 (including VAT) it's approx. £60 cheaper than the full ReelMagic card, a cut which has been achieved through the loss of the soundtrack.

ReelMagic uses the new industry standard MPEG format to run sharp, Full Motion Video (FMV) simultaneously with soundtrack. Movies can be played on your PC with it, and games can display non-grainy video footage.

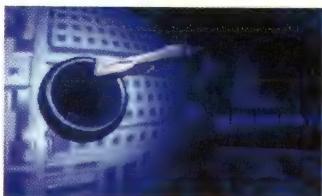
The card can display 32,768 colours in any mode and the screen is resizable from 16x16 to 1024x768. Sustained video frame rates per second are 30 (NTSC), 25 (PAL) and 24 (film).

Incidentally, ReelMagic Lite comes complete with a copy of *The Horde*, a review of which can be found on page 48.



edutainment, setting up the EA Kids label while the merger was going ahead.

Cheap CD's, broke retailers



It could be good news for the consumer as a number of major retailers prepare for battle and start discounting CD software. Future Zone go first with their Chartbuster scheme. Three titles for every CD platform - CD-i, CD32 and, of course, PC CD-ROM will have up to £20 knocked off. The company have yet to say exactly which games will get the Chartbuster treatment, but it's believed *Microcosm* will be included, with £10 knocked off the RRP bringing it to a reasonable £39.99.

Simon gets saucy

Simon The Sorceror CD came oh so close to a review this month, failing by a cat's whisker when debugging problems set the schedule back by ten days. The game has been promised for next month, along with a whopping playable demo for the CD issue of PC Power. Chris Barrie takes the role of Simon The Sorceror; Roger Blake the Druid, Sordid, Calypso, the Owl and the Game Show Host.

It all ended in tears

The planned marriage of Broderbund and Electronic Arts has been called off after Broderbund's board of directors decided that EA's initial offering had seriously undervalued the company. The spanners in the works conspiring to undermine the deal were - a drop in share price for EA and the Parsons deal. The former meant that, instead of the \$400 million agreed upon in February, Broderbund would actually receive only \$335 million; the latter led Broderbund to decide that the original deal wasn't as good as they had thought - Parsons paid \$462 million for The Software Toolworks.

It's not all bad for Electronic Arts. Not only have Broderbund agreed to pay EA \$10 million in compensation, but the company have also been given a valuable insight into the world of

Lawnmower upgrade

Sales Curve Interactive (SCI) are well aware of the disappointment caused by their decision not to release the 256 colour version of *The Lawnmower Man* and plan to release an upgrade in the form of a partial refund when the sequel, *Cyberwar*, is released.

Andy McVitty, once of NMS (Nintendo's official magazine) and now the company's new PR spokesperson said: "We haven't finalised the exact arrangements yet, but provided that some form of evidence of purchase can be shown, we will do our best to give back the consumer some of the trust they have shown in us."

SCI's design not to release a 256 colour version was based on the belief that technology had already made the game redundant, and that it was best to forge ahead with a completely new product with all of the new technology and compression techniques included.

Cyberwar will come in glorious 256 colours, and for those with a ReelMagic card (lucky so and sos) there will be an MPEG upgrade.

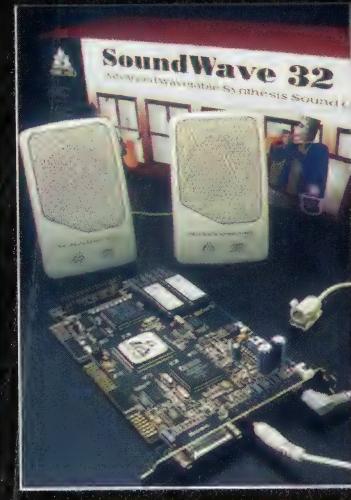


US Gold's Multimedia Giveaway

PC Power and US Gold play fairy godmother to your PC once more and offer one lucky reader the chance to transform their pumpkin PC into a shiny new multi-media machine.



For more information on the Orchid range dial: 0256-479-898. For more information on Kixx dial: 021-606-1800



After their fantastic *Delta V*, US Gold have certainly reinforced their reputation as one of the leading PC games publishers. After many years of producing games for the 8-bit range of computers, US Gold bounced onto the PC scene with such hits as *Commander*, *Flashback* and *Street Fighter II*. They have now moved into the budget market with the Kixx XL range of CD games, releasing some of the classic games of yesteryear on CD. If you haven't got a CD-ROM drive yet, or you just want some free games, then read on.

Together with PC Power, US Gold have put up some amazing prizes for what must be this mag's most extravagant competition. The winner will receive their choice of five Kixx XL CD-ROM titles from the wide range of classic games available. "That's not enough to warrant me buying a postage stamp!", I hear you cry. OK, for all of you gold-diggers out there, the winner will also receive a complete Orchid multimedia pack complete with SoundWave 32 sound card and Orchid double-speed CD-ROM drive. Is that a whopper of a prize or what? Three runners-up will also be able to choose five titles from the Kixx XL range of budget games. Don't worry if you haven't got a CD-ROM drive, there are loads of floppy games to choose from as well.

The Kixx XL range takes the best of the past-master PC games and offers them at well under the price of a newly-released commercial game. Recently, US Gold added a whole host of CD-ROM titles to their Kixx range and with their new Kixx XL CD label, this puts US Gold at the forefront of the budget games market. These budget beauties include: *Police Quest 1*, *Space Quest 1*, *F19 Stealth Fighter*, *Pirates*, *Links*, *Cruise for a Corpse* and the hilarious *Leisure Suit Larry*. Each CD title will be released at the recommended retail price of just £14.99. Now that's what I call value.

The Orchid Multimedia Upgrade Kit comes complete with the award-winning SoundWave 32 sound card and Orchid's very own double-speed CD-ROM drive. In short, everything that you could possibly need to give your PC total MPC Level II compatibility.

The SoundWave 32 combines complete multimedia capability with simultaneous sound standard support. The SoundWave card uses an advanced 20 MIPS Digital Signal Processor and is fully compatible with the SoundBlaster, Adlib, Windows Sound System and the Roland MPU-401 sound cards. The sound card also supports general MIDI processing and comes with a MIDI interface built in.

For realistic sounds, the SoundWave 32 has over 8Mbits of wavetable ROM

storage space comprising actual digital recordings of over 196 musical instruments and effects. Most popular games are developed using the Roland MT-32 standard and the SoundWave reproduces all 32 channels simultaneously with SoundBlaster effects for the ultimate sound experience.

To compliment this awesome sound card, Orchid have also included one of their CDS-3110 CD-ROM drives. It connects directly to the SoundWave 32 and can sustain a data transfer rate of 300K per second. Front panel controls are included as standard and this allows you to play normal audio CDs without the need to install fiddly software or special drivers. The CDS-3110 also has a special 'sleep-circuit' which maximises the laser's life and considerably reduces power consumption.

This wonderful kit retails for £319 (exc. VAT), but we're giving you the chance to win one, together with your choice of five Kixx XL CD-ROM budget games. All you have to do is answer the questions below correctly, and you could well be joining the wonderful world of multimedia.

All of the questions are simple multiple-choice, so if you don't know the answer to any of them, ask someone, look them up or take a wild guess!



(1) The CD range of budget games from US Gold is called...

- (a) Kixx XL CD-ROM
- (b) Kixx XL CD-GAMES
- (c) Kixx XL CD

(2) The Orchid SoundWave 32 uses which popular synth module?

- (a) Roland MT-32
- (b) Roland MT-10
- (c) Roland LAPC-1

(3) The CDS-3110 uses which special circuit to prolong laser life?

- (a) Sleep-Circuit
- (b) Snooze-Circuit
- (c) Comatose-Circuit

Send your entry on a postcard or envelope to: Multimedia Giveaway, PC Power, Paragon Publishing, 124 Old Christchurch Road, Bournemouth, Dorset, BH1 1NF. Please state if you do not wish to receive promotional material. Entries must reach the above address by 12th August 1994 and the editor's decision is final, full-stop, end of discussion (I think you have the idea).

Multimedia News

Metamorphosis update

More news on the add-on front. It's now confirmed that Creative Technology are putting the 3DO on a card and that Sigma Designs, producer of the ReelMagic Card, are to do the same with Atari's 64-bit Jaguar. The progression of 3DO to PC is a reasonably natural one - both have the facility to use CD as a means of storage. The Jaguar, on the other hand, relies on cartridges as a storage medium, which makes the jump to PC compatibility an even greater effort. This problem will simply be wiped off the smiling face of the future if Atari's announcement that they have a CD add-on for the Jaguar proves to be a glorious truth.



Windows loses

Microsoft, keen to get into the lucrative games market, have released Writing Hot Games For Microsoft Windows, accessible from the WINMM forum on Compuserve. It's part of a concerted effort by Microsoft after the Software Publishers Association announced figures revealing that Windows-based software dominated over DOS-based applications in all areas, with the single exception of the games market. In total, \$3.5 billion worth of Windows-based software was sold last year, in contrast to just \$1.9 billion of DOS-based software. However, only \$39 million worth of Windows-based entertainment software was sold, as opposed to \$319 million for DOS. In addition to Writing Hot Games For Microsoft Windows, Microsoft are also pushing their WinG software library and development tools. These have been designed to help programmers write fast, 32-bit games for Windows.

Humble pie all round at Microsoft

Following a legal battle with Stac Electronics, Microsoft are now to stop shipping their DoubleSpace disk

compression software with MS DOS. Stac claimed that Microsoft had broken copyright laws due to the similarities between DoubleSpace and their own product - Stacker. A Californian court recently ruled in favour of Stac, awarding them \$120 million damages.

Allegedly, Microsoft will now be distributing a re-coded compression package which they will be naming ExtraSpace. Microsoft are also now attempting to stop Stac from using certain Windows code in their latest version of Stacker.

Faster daddy, faster

Intel recently launched two souped-up Pentium chips and a faster 486SX. The 486SX has had its clock doubled, allowing it to run at 50MHz. This offers better value for money than a DX running at the same speed. The two Pentiums clock up speeds of 90MHz and 100MHz, and have suitably matched prices.

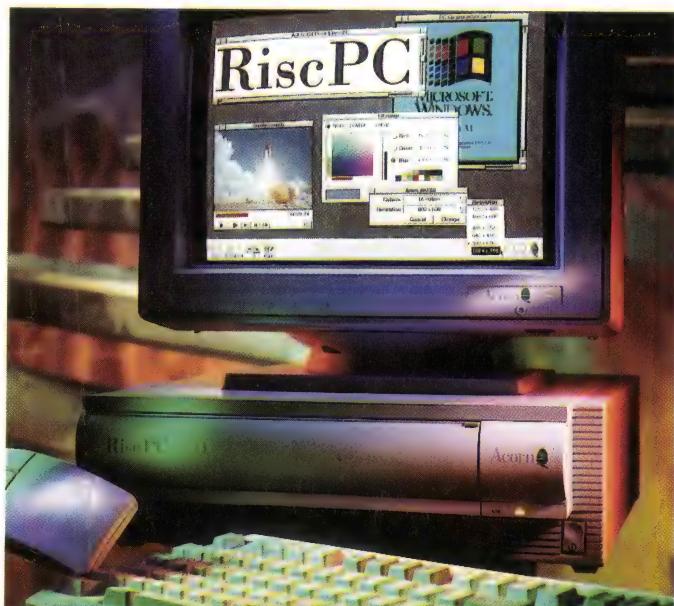
AWE struck

Creative Labs, purveyors of bolt-on parts for all PCs, have now added the SoundBlaster AWE 32 to their range.

Acorn get serious

You remember Acorn computers don't you? You know, those things they had at school. Not really much cop were they? At least not when you compare them to your nice, shiny PC. Well, take a look at the new Medusa RISC PC from Acorn and you might be in for a surprise. Despite incorporating a certain pair of letters into its title, this machine is not a direct IBM compatible, but uses the latest generation of RISC processors from Advanced RISC Machines.

Acorn will also be marketing plug-in PC compatibility cards, which they claim will not only match, but will better the performance of standard Intel PCs. A 486 card will be the first to become available and sources suggest that a Pentium version may follow, either from Acorn or a third party. An entry level Medusa will cost you £1,249 and 486 compatibility comes at a mere £99 extra. Acorn Computers are on 0223-254-254.



The MPC CD-ROM team sift through the endless stream of technobabble for the odd nugget of interesting, nay useful information.

It comes with 32 voices and 16 channels and costs £270. Whether this offering will become tomorrow's standard, or find itself following in the footsteps of the ill-fated SB Pro, remains to be seen. Creative Labs have also taken 15%-20% off the rest of the products in their range and have just snatched a one year agreement to provide 3DO cards. Hear what Creative Labs have to say for themselves on 0753-756-813.



Merge mania

Several of the major players in the applications software market have recently decided to opt for the 'safety in numbers strategy' and have either merged with or bought out their competitors. The largest of these deals saw Novell welcoming WordPerfect Corporation into its fold, thereby creating what one might describe as 'one hell of a large and powerful software company'.

Also, Symantec and Central Point, both well known for their utilities packages, have joined forces. Although both parties will continue to market their own products for the next year, the fruits of their combined expertise will no doubt prove interesting in the long run.

Finally, desktop publishing experts, Aldus and Adobe, have also decided to join forces. They will create an empire which would no doubt be of great interest to the American counterpart of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission.

The 60's, they are a-coming

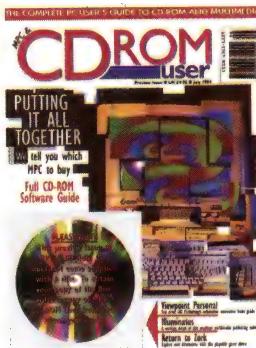


Following the success of *The Rock 'n' Roll Years: The 50's*, Supervision are set to follow it up with a '60s version. The Mersey Beat, Flower Power and Carnaby Street are due to receive the CD-ROM treatment, with 20 tracks from the 60's and lots and lots of FMV to show the signs of the times. "The biggest problem is getting the licenses to use the material. It's proving to be a nightmare," said a PR spokesperson for the company.

Clickety click

Due soon from Europress Software, is their Windows game creator – Click and Play. This package is about as close as PC users are likely to get to the excellent STOS and AMOS, which did very well, thank you, on the Atari ST and Commodore Amiga respectively. As well as allowing users to design pretty much any kind of game that their warped minds can invent, Click and Play can also be used to create their own screen savers. As with the two aforementioned packages, user groups will be set up and extra bolt-on disks will be made available at a later date. For more information ring Europress Software on 0625-859-333.

Coming soon



You might have noticed something rather thick and pleasing stuck on the back of this very issue of PC Power. It's a preview issue of Paragon Publishing's forthcoming magazine MPC & CD-ROM User. Issue one will be on sale on the 28th of June and it's going to be absolutely jam-packed with essential news, reviews and features for anyone with an interest in multimedia and CD-ROMs. Of course, every month there's going to be a cover-mounted CD-ROM with a lot more on it than the usual handful of boring rolling demos. So if you want to get your hands on the best CD magazine around, get your newsagent to reserve you a copy now.

What's inside

Confused by your PC? Haven't got the faintest idea what makes it tick? Believe me, you're by no means

alone. Fortunately there's an answer to your problems. What you need is PC/Computing How Multimedia Computers Work, from The Software Toolworks, distributed by Mindscape. This CD-ROM program takes you on a fully animated journey through the intestines of your PC, showing you just what makes the whole caboodle go.

So if you've ever wondered what that fat box before you does and how you can get it to do it, contact Mindscape on 0444-246-333.

Shareware expansion

Lazer Distribution have just signed up the rights to be the sole UK agent for Microforum, a Canadian CD shareware publisher.

Microforum publish a wide range of leisure titles including Super Arcade Games, Trivia CD and the VideoGame Solution CD. There are also more serious titles like Power Utilities. "The majority of retailers are shying away from consoles and selling more PC software simply because there are substantially higher margins on PC products," said Product Manager, Shaun Morris.

"Shareware has never taken off in the UK before, but then it has never been presented in such a professional way," he added.

More Microsoft

Microsoft have four new CD-ROM titles for their Microsoft Home series: Ancient Lands, Dangerous, Multimedia Strauss and Microsoft Bookshelf.

Ancient Lands is a Windows-based program about the peoples of Ancient Egypt, Rome and Greece and includes such elements as walking through a battlefield with a Roman soldier. Dangerous Creatures is a wildlife program which includes the use of digitised video.

Microsoft Bookshelf looks to be the most interesting title of them all, including seven reference books such as Roget's Thesaurus, Concise Columbia Encyclopaedia, the Columbia Dictionary of Quotations and the Hammond World Atlas.

Read all about it

In another exclusive agreement, LeisureSoft have signed an exclusive sales and distribution deal for Castle Communications Video CD products. The titles will come from Castle's multimedia division and include: *Dinosaurs: The Myths And The Reality*; *Pavarotti: Nessun Dorma* and *The History Of Aviation*.

Castle Communications are also working on a number of interactive titles to cover music and special interest markets.

CHARTS

Moving on up No change Moving on down Brand new entry

CD-ROM GAMES

1	(NE)	7th Guest / Dune	NA%	Telstar	£49.99
2	(NE)	Sam & Max	83%	US Gold	£45.99
3	(1)	Megarace	84%	Mindscape	£39.99
4	(2)	Rebel Assault	89%	US Gold	£45.99
5	(3)	Day Of The Tentacle	90%	US Gold	£45.99
6	(5)	CD Challenge Pack	84%	Mindscape	£39.99
7	(NE)	Battle Isle 2	90%	Blue Byte	£49.99
8	(NE)	Ravenloft	70%	US Gold	£45.99
9	(4)	Gabriel Knight	89%	Sierra Online	£44.99
10	(8)	Iron Helix	69%	Microprose	£39.99

CD-ROM MULTIMEDIA

1	(2)	Myst	91%	Broderbund	£49.99
2	(1)	MS Encarta 94	NA%	Microsoft	£99.99
3	(NE)	Sam & Max	83%	Lucas Arts	£39.99
4	(4)	MS Schubert	NA%	Microsoft	£57.58
5	(NE)	Reunion	82%	Grandslam	£39.99
6	(3)	MS Art Gallery	NA%	Microsoft	£57.58
7	(5)	Beethoven's 5th	NA%	IPC	£49.99
8	(9)	Gabriel Knight	88%	Sierra	£44.99
9	(7)	Microcosm	80%	Psygnosis	£49.99
10	(NE)	Battle Isle 2	90%	Blue Byte	£49.99

FULL PRICE

1	(1)	Sim City 2000	90%	Maxis	£39.99
2	(NE)	Cannon Fodder	87%	Virgin	£34.99
3	(NE)	F14 Fleet Defender	85%	Microprose	£44.99
4	(3)	Premier Manager 2	76%	Gremlin	£34.99
5	(NE)	Ultima VIII	82%	Electronic Arts	£49.99
6	(4)	Frontier: Elite 2	75%	Gametek	£39.99
7	(2)	MS Flight Sim V.5	81%	Microsoft	£39.99
8	(NE)	Beneath a Steel Sky	73%	Virgin	£34.99
9	(6)	UFO: Enemy Unknown	86%	Microprose	£44.99
10	(7)	Elder Scrolls	86%	US Gold	£45.99
11	(NA)	TFX	90%	Ocean	£44.99
12	(NA)	Sam & Max HD	87%	US Gold	£42.99
13	(NA)	Subwar 2050	82%	Microprose	£44.99
14	(NA)	Wolfenstein 3-D	85%	ID Software	£19.99
15	(NA)	Civilization	90%	Microprose	£39.99
16	(NA)	Fields of Glory	NA%	Microprose	£44.99
17	(NA)	Indy Car Racing	91%	Virgin	£44.99
18	(NA)	Sensible Soccer 92/93	90%	Renegade	£32.99
19	(NA)	Champ Manager Comp	NA%	Domark	£27.99
20	(NA)	X-Wing	92%	US Gold	£45.99

See No Evil

Evil

Tony Kaye, PC Power's wise monkey, guides you through the graphics card market.



t may come as a surprise to you, but the PC was never designed to display graphics. The basic IBM XT and AT machines were designed to be 'number crunchers' and not the systems we know and love (or hate) today. So what is it that's turned this around?

The simple answer is the graphics display card, be it Hercules, CGA, VGA, SVGA or XGA. Nowadays, very few people have less than a VGA display and most modern machines offer SVGA as standard. A poor graphics card can make the whole system seem slow, so choosing the right one is important.

I won't go into the technical differences in the systems as space will not allow, but we are looking at the standard home machine, which is probably a 386 or 486 based system with SVGA capabilities. What is the difference between the cards available and which one should you buy if you need to upgrade?

To answer these questions, we've taken six cards from throughout the range and installed them in the same machine running the same software. The computer is a standard 486SX25 with a 170Mb hard disk and four megabytes of RAM – a fairly typical home set-up.

We started with a standard Oak Technologies 512K card, available for around £35 from many retailers and finished up with the latest 64-bit card from Orchid – the Kelvin and the £400 Taxan GTS Ultra Pro. Here are the results...

The future

What does the future hold in store for PC graphics? As we go to press, Argonaut Software Ltd in London have told us that they are developing 3-D graphics technology. This will offer real-time rendering, 3-D polygon graphics and many other features for a relatively low cost. The first of these chipsets are most likely to be seen on Cirrus Logic boards and will offer stunning graphics for around the £200 mark.

Argonaut's Jez San said "The new chips will offer performance comparable to the middle of the Silicon Graphics range at low cost. The first boards with the new software could well sell for under £200."

DESCRIPTION: OAK TECHNOLOGIES SVGA CARD (ISA BUS)
PRICE: approx. £35 (£41.12 inc. VAT)
MEMORY: 512K
MAX. RESOLUTION: 1024x768
MAX. COLOURS: 256



The Oak 512K card offers 256 colours at 800x600, but it's very slow.

This is a standard card found in many new computers when they are bought 'off the shelf'. It has a minimum of memory which will allow use in 800x600 resolution with 256 colours, but it has no acceleration for Windows. This makes screen updates slow and laborious and any serious use of our double-glazed friend will result in the card making its way through the nearest open (real) window!

For most games applications from DOS, this card is adequate, but it has no really redeeming features, apart from the price. Each card was tested with a shareware backgammon game. This card produced computer moves which looked as if they were almost in slow motion. Attempting to play any kind of action game in Windows would seem to be nigh on impossible.

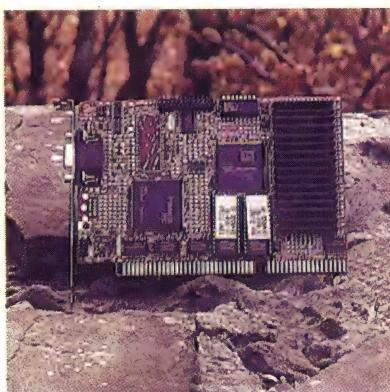
Individual drivers are provided for the common DOS applications like Lotus 123, Wordperfect and Microsoft Word as well as some popular CAD packages. These specific drivers make quite a difference to these programs and make them easier to use.

A card of this type is ideal if your needs do not include graphics. Even in Windows, it would work adequately in an office for running the word processor or database, but attempting anything more than that would be wearing on the patience.

Unless you are really strapped for the extra £20 or so that an accelerated card would cost, avoid this one.

RATING 3/10

DESCRIPTION: S3 LR215X (ISA)
PRICE: approx. £65 (£76.37 inc. VAT)
MEMORY: 1Mb
MAX. RESOLUTION: 1280x960
MAX COLOURS: 64K



This S3 card offers good performance for those on a tight budget.

The extra 512K of on-board memory makes a difference to the resolutions available with this card and up to 64,000 colours are available in 640x480 resolution, with 256 colours at up to 1024x768. However, the most important advantage this card has over the Oak card is the Windows accelerator.

Accelerated graphics appear on the screen faster and the wait for an update is a lot less annoying. This card is capable of an adjustable refresh rate, which means that you can adjust it using the switches on the back to get the most from your own configuration.

Three disks are provided with the card offering a range of drivers for most popular DOS packages as well as a range of Windows drivers for the various resolution and colour configurations. This particular card clashed with the Qemm memory management program, which can use spare video memory to find extra space for program placement, and the system had to be reconfigured without the program. However, Memmaker was installed and the problem disappeared. Mind you, this sort of problem can happen with any upgrade and it could have been a peculiarity with the machine used for testing and not a general problem. Please write and tell us if you've got an S3 card with or without this quirk and we will report on your findings.

This is a good all-round card and perfectly adequate if you don't want to spend too much money, don't use Windows too much and don't concentrate on applications like DTP that are heavily graphics orientated. Occasional use of graphics-based applications would be fine, but it could become wearing after a long time at the keyboard.

RATING 6/10

DESCRIPTION: GENOA 8500 VL (VLSI BUS)
PRICE: £139 (£163.32 inc. VAT)
MEMORY: 1Mb
MAX. RESOLUTION: 1280x1024
MAX COLOURS: 16.8M (Turbo)



The Genoa 8500VL gives an impressive performance.

We now start to enter the world of 'serious' graphics cards with the Genoa. Depending upon the applications are being used, the screen refresh rate can be up to 12 times faster than a non-accelerated card. Up to 16.8 million colours (640x480) make PhotoCD displays stunning and you can take the card all the way up to 1280x1024 (16 colours) if you need to. If you upgrade the card by adding another megabyte of RAM, the top resolution will support 256 colours and you can have up to 64,000 colours at 1024x768 instead of the standard 256.

The extra speed is very noticeable in Windows and, with the addition of the DOS drivers, graphics heavy applications seem to fly in comparison with the previous cards, but, of course, it does use the faster 32-bit VESA local bus and have the Cirrus Logic CL-GD5426 GUI (Graphics User Interface) accelerator.

Performance is much better in Windows and this card is a good bet for general work, including the occasional DTP or CAD session. The performance in DOS is good and the screen updates are acceptable for most applications.

RATING 7/10

DESCRIPTION: ORCHID FAHRENHEIT 1280' PLUS (VL BUS)
PRICE: £159 (£186.82 inc. VAT)
MEMORY 1Mb
MAX. RESOLUTION 1280x1024
MAX COLOURS 16.8M



The Fahrenheit card is so good, I wanted to buy the company!

Entering the world of 24-bit, Windows accelerated, true colour video cards brings a new dimension of speed to your PC. The addition of the extra speed almost makes it seem like you have a faster processor installed. This card offers a good range of resolutions and colours with 16 colours available at 1280x1024 and 256 at 1024x768, but add another megabyte of memory to the card and you can increase that to 256 in the top resolution.

There is only one word to describe the Fahrenheit - Wow! This is a fast card and the 'Instantaneous Refresh' claim is not too much of an exaggeration. Everything you run from shareware backgammon to Microsoft Publisher is a joy as you realise that the wait is for the processor and not the video card. Just run one of the Wizard utilities from the latter program and you'll see what I mean.

All of the different resolution settings are controlled from an additional icon in your Control Panel instead of having to select the correct driver from the Windows Setup icon. The menu is easy and clear and shows you exactly what is available and what is not by greying out those items that you can't select.

With a four year warranty, free technical support and even a BBS to download the latest versions of the software, this card stands head and shoulders above the rest for speed, compatibility and ease of use. Personally, I've not found a better card for my particular requirements, which include a lot of Windows work.

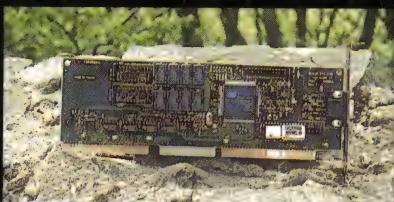
RATING 9/10

The newest graphics accelerator card from Orchid is the Kelvin 64 (get the connection? Kelvin - Fahrenheit?). This 64-bit card provides acceleration in all display modes and not just certain areas. The extra memory also provides for more colours at higher resolutions with 16.8 million at 640x480 and 800x600, 65,536 at 1024x768 and 256 at 1280x1024.

As with the Fahrenheit, the Kelvin has a Control Panel utility to adjust the settings and access is gained by installing the software and then starting Windows in VGA mode. You then have full access to the range of resolutions, colour selection and virtual screen mode. This takes a little getting used to, but the selection screen is clear and well presented. An added feature of the new card is the ability to lower the power consumption of your screen by up to 85% when used with a green PC monitor. It does this by powering down to 'sleep mode', leaving any open applications completely unaffected. The promised linear acceleration is delivered with all modes showing a marked speed increase over other similar cards. I have no reservations in recommending this 'New kid on the Block' as highly as its sister.

RATING 9/10

DESCRIPTION: ORCHID KELVIN 64 (VL BUS)
PRICE: £199 (£233.82 inc. VAT)
MEMORY 2Mb
MAX. RESOLUTION 1280x1024
MAX COLOURS 16.8M



The Kelvin promises faster acceleration, more colours and reduced power consumption. What more could you ask for?

DESCRIPTION: TAXAN GTS ULTRA PRO (ISA BUS)
PRICE: £399 (£468.82 inc. VAT)
MEMORY 1Mb
MAX. RESOLUTION 1280x1024
MAX COLOURS 16.8M



At £400, this may be excellent for specific applications, but as an all-rounder, it's a bit of a non-starter.

Eour hundred pounds for a video card? It must be something special. These were my thoughts when the GTS Ultra Pro arrived. This two megabyte card has an impressive range of resolution and colour settings, offering 65,000 colours at 1024x768 and 256 at 1280x1024 as well as 16.8 million at the lower two resolutions (or, as the box tells us, 16,777,216, to be precise).

Setting the card up is an experience. To get all of the resolutions and all of the colours, you need to have your monitor manual handy. You must tell the setup program what resolutions and refresh rates your monitor is capable of before it will let you use them. The wrong refresh rate and you could do irreparable damage to the VDU.

The accelerator chip is the ATI Technologies Mach 32 graphics processor, not widely used in the industry, but effective all the same. This was not the fastest of the bunch in the operations I used to test all of the cards. I don't want to be unfair to Taxan, but for general work, this one just didn't live up to expectations. It may be ideal for specific applications, but as an all-rounder, Graham Gooch it ain't!

To be fair, this test is for all round performance and not specifics, so at £399, the Taxan GTS Ultra Pro is not worth considering. Maybe if I was looking at high level applications for business, it would get a much better press and I'd have a DX-2 66, a Pentium or even a top end Power PC!

RATING 6/10

CONCLUSIONS

If you hadn't already gathered, I fell in love with the performance of the Orchid Fahrenheit card. Its blistering turn of speed made me check that the humble SX25 processor hadn't run off and left a DX chip in its place. I was so

impressed that Orchid are going to have to prise it out of my computer with a crow-bar! Each system is different, though, so try to see all of the cards in your price range, and make sure the one you buy will benefit your software.

The Net

Clive James takes the Michael out of it on Sundays and scores of new games promise to send you hurtling on a virtual journey through it, but there has emerged a new champion for the data/information superhighway/infobahn/whatever - The Net.

Up 'til now, the level of computer coverage on British airwaves has been pretty abysmal. The choice has been between the fashion faux pas of bandanna-clad 'gamesmasters' and lapel-flapping Open University boffins. There has been nothing for the ordinary, everyday PC user, and little attempt to keep the British public informed on and entertained with the latest advances in computing and communications. It's been said that as many as 40% of people in Britain have some sort of computer system in their homes. Every man, woman and child in this country will certainly need to interact with a system at some point and their lives will be heavily affected by computer technology. Yet it is still the case that science generally, and computer technology in particular, is poorly served by this nation's broadcasters.

Is television sticking its head in the sand to avoid looking the future in the eye? A future where the public would have total control over the programmes, films, images, sounds and information that entered their homes, without the intervention of massive, 'ministry of truth' style corporations. Is this future even something we want? The information super highway could be in danger of creating digital snarl-ups in your very own home. Data pollution could eat away at your mind more insidiously than mere lead poisoning. Or maybe Clive James has got the right idea and this vision of the future is just a hyped-up techie's wet dream. Search for a sign of the information super highway in Britain today and you'll get little more than some e-mail from Dutch students.

Should we be disappointed or should we :-)? The enthusiasm created by the Internet and the growing cult of e-mail with its dedicated family of users is the real and human face of the mythical data highway. Okay, at the moment there may be a small percentage of home computer users with their own modem but a significant number have access to the Internet through machines at work, school or university and the rest of us who are without the opportunity to make an endless number of electronic pals are probably only waiting for the dosh to get us on-line. Still, the level of media interest in this phenomenon has been limited to the highlighting of e-mail romances, whether it be in Neighbours or Gary Trudeau's Doonesbury cartoon strip. There is an Internet mag, produced by Mecklermedia, but this is about the limit of comms-based media available to the network-user.

The net is young, however. It's only really been

established in this country for a couple of years. Look to the States and you could be looking at the future. It's been decided by the powers that be at the Beeb that the public needs to be prepared for the digital doom or delights that lie ahead. Three programmes were conceived to meet the need for user-friendly information on computer-based technology: The Net, The Big Byte and Computing for the Less Terrified.

The Net is perhaps the most innovative and interesting part of this trio, setting itself up as an attempt to represent the networking phenomenon for the first time on national TV. The story of the Net begins, appropriately enough, in America.

John Wyver is a veteran programme maker and joint director of Illuminations - an independent production company which produces innovative programmes about contemporary culture. One of these was a programme called Mood TV - a piece on the development of the data super highway in the States. John was struck with the energy and excitement surrounding the subject

"The info-superhighway could create data pollution which eats away at your mind more insidiously than mere lead poisoning."

and realised the dearth of any information on things digital on British TV. On his return to these shores he put forward a proposal to the BBC who had simultaneously decided that there was a need to be met. And so, in a burst of interaction, The Net was born.

This mewling and puking progeny has been fine-tuned into a strapping youth by the combined talents of the BBC's Education Department and Illuminations (TV) Ltd. I spoke to the Executive Producer for the BBC, Jonathan Drori (very tall and very important person) and the Series Producer, Stephen Arkell (just as important, not so tall) about Bill Gates, getting flamed and the ubiquitous godfather of cyber-hype - William Gibson.

PCP: The BBC are suddenly putting out all this computer-related programming and there seems to be a greater interest in computers generally from the mass media. Do you think this is a response to the popularity of computer and video games?

JD: No, I don't think so.

SA: Yeah, absolutely.

PCP: uh-huh, OK.

JD: What we're doing is responding to what we see as educational needs in the audience. We're trying to achieve greater IT awareness and literacy in general. We, as a department, have had a long history of doing programmes about information technology. The BBC computer literacy project back in the 80's came from here. At the time, it did something quite special for the country, in that suddenly Britain was more computer literate than anywhere else in Europe, and that was largely because the BBC managed to get a BBC micro into every school - you were probably part of that.

I recalled those heady days of computer innocence when we would gather round a monitor and make the line "Miss Singleton is a cow" repeat itself endlessly down the screen, flashing in various colours.

JD: There's obviously still a continuing need amongst the population for more information and education about information technology. And that's what we're trying to meet with this range of programmes.

PCP: How did the ideas for the programme develop? Were there many changes between the original idea and the actual programme, and are you happy with the final result?

SA: John Wyver originally discussed ideas with Julian Ellison, who now runs the BBC networking club, and Ben Woolley, one of our presenters, who has been a computer journalist for years. They went through a number of permutations for the series. Originally, we were thinking that there should be a granny doing the games review. We thought it would be quite cute. (All offended grannies please write to the BBC.) But we piloted a few grannies and it didn't really work.

Another idea was a feature called 'what's in your laptop?' with Julian Clary, looking at famous people's personal electronic notebooks and organisers. But no one had anything interesting or shocking enough to sustain it.

Basically though, things have come out pretty much as we wanted them. The response from the Internet to the programme has been amazing. We've had about 800 bits of e-mail out of the first programme alone, mostly complementary, which was a massive response. I've never seen anything like it before. Even when I worked on the News at Ten we had maybe 50 calls, top whack, mostly to complain.

PCP: The programme has a wide-ranging,



Top: Jules - game reviewer and fave girlie of the PC Power sad man's club.

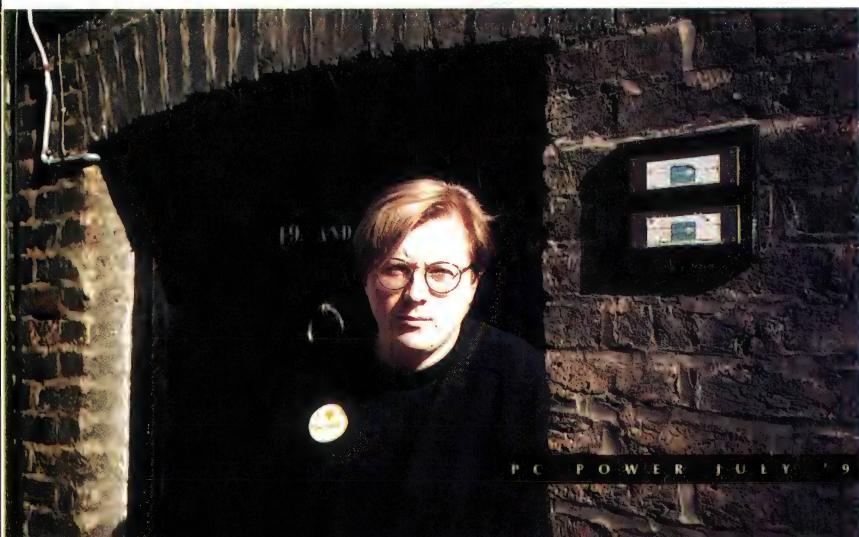
Top right: Presenters Rajan Datar and Susan Rae pose in front of some computers, to remind you what the programme's about.

Right: Jonathan Drori, Executive Producer, Continuing Education and Training Department, BBC.

(Thanks for the tea, Jon.)

Below: Stephen Arkell, Series Producer for Illuminations (thanks for the tea, Laura), sporting the prototype for a range of attractive Net merchandise.

Below right: Illuminations' grungey name-plate.



magazine-y feel to it, so what sort of audience is The Net aimed at? Do the computer-ignorant want to watch a programme about computers?

JD: I definitely didn't want the programme to be a magazine for techies because the techies will watch it anyway. It's very important for us to reach people who would not otherwise be reached by the personal computer magazines. We have to do something different to try and attract non-techie people in and that's why the programme has the magazine-style items in it.

SA: The original brief for the programme was to be the sort of 'Top Gear' of computing. Top Gear gets loads of viewers. Everyone's got a car or, at least, everyone knows what a car is and they can all find something interesting in Top Gear. It's a similar idea for The Net. Maybe 30-40% of people have some sort of home system, whether it be a games system or a PC or a Mac. People are interacting with them more and more, so presumably there should be a demand for a programme about them.

I looked at some of the e-mail that Illuminations had received after the first programme. It seemed as if the techies had certainly tuned in eagerly and they seemed pleased that, at last, there was a programme interested in computer issues, particularly the Internet. However, among the criticisms were accusations that the items were, at times, too simplistic and there was quite a hostile reception to the inclusion of a games review slot (hosted by a 13 year-old schoolgirl-with-attitude called Jules). What had been the motivation behind including the games section, which seemed to be aimed at a younger audience than that envisaged for the rest of the programme?

JD: Well, we just wanted something that would be a break or a breather in the programme, really. We were fairly certain that we'd have a games review slot, because that's the way a lot of people interact with computers and how they first get to know them. If kids want to play games, that means there's possibly a computer in the house, so adults can get interested in that way. But really, all of the BBC's computing programming is aimed at adults, apart from the sections of The Net with Jules, which are quite obviously aimed at a teenage audience.

SA: People tune in to the games review and then see some of the rest of the programme and hopefully find that interesting as well. However, I'd say the games review was adult-oriented. I suppose it's directed at the late-teens to early twenties age range.

PCP: The games reviews on The Net seem to be mostly on console games. Is that because they're the ones that kids usually have?

JD: We have to choose the ones that are likely to be most popular, but actually they're all different ones. I think we've included all the games machines available at the moment. They don't all get high scores, either. Some of them end up being thought of by Jules as pretty crappy, really.

PCP: What about the accusations of oversimplification?

SA: It's difficult to find the line between being too



"The original brief for the programme was to be a sort of 'Top Gear' of computing."

simply and basic, or boring people with gobbledegook which they don't understand because they've only ever interacted with computers through games. I think we've found a reasonable sort of balance with the programme. TV isn't the sort of medium where you can go into a lot of detail unless you have a seven or eight hour programme. We just had seven or eight-minute pieces, which can never be incredibly detailed. At the same time, we don't want to alienate technical viewers and we do want to look more at the detail of things when we can. But to get a broader audience, you have to cast your net (Stephen's 'phrase of the day') a bit wider.

We've got to aim at getting about 1 million viewers and you couldn't get that if you were going into immense detail. If people want to go into things in more depth, there are some very good magazines they can get (PC Power for instance – ed).

PCP: The e-mail you received called, perhaps unsurprisingly, for more items on networking. Obviously, going from the name of the programme, this is something which you do feel is important. Do you see The Net as mainly a support programme for network users?

SA: The idea had always been to connect the programme with the communications side of computing. We wanted to include something to do with communications or the Internet every week. The problem is that people think it should be a programme just about the Internet, but I don't think that's viable.

JD: The programme itself is designed to be a metaphor for the way that networks operate, in the way that you can dart around from one thing to another. Have you ever read Neuromancer by William Gibson?

PCP: What a question! Is it not obligatory reading for every pretentious computer journalist?

JD: Well, the programme's designed to have that kind of feel to it - travelling inside and inside and inside it, and you get that kind of feeling from the graphics. I get a thrill every time I see them.

SA: The original idea we had for the graphics was this William Gibson-esque idea of cyberspace and the Internet and lots of different points of light. The sort of analogy we were using was flying into a big, American, grid-style city at night, seeing lots of different lights and different layers. It was difficult to visualize what sort of image would be a good starting point for a programme and also represent what we are trying to get across in The Net.

Originally, Ben and John were thinking of having this thing called a cyber-den. You have a rose-covered cottage, all traditional on the outside, then you get inside and it's all techy. We talked to a couple of graphics houses about the lights idea and they came back with a couple of

suggestions. One came up with a very literal translation of what the Internet might be. It was all gothic with lots of pipes and globe lights. The one we chose had a more metaphorical way of describing the net, with the actual programme logo duplicated hundreds of thousands of times, representing countless pieces of data. It's a slightly techy, but not unreal look, slightly organic, yet computer graphic-y. I think it does represent what the programme is supposed to be. We wanted to be a sort of Wired (excellent US techy mag with enough muscle to get people like Gibson to write for it – Ed) on TV. I think we've managed to capture that kind of feel.

PCP: Someone said to me that some sections of the programme reminded them of Tomorrow's World.

JD: That's inevitable. There are only a certain number of ways of putting science across and within the series we try and do lots of different ways. One of the ways is what Tomorrow's World do, but if you go to any other country in the Western world, you'll find other things that look like Tomorrow's World too. They look the same because that's a good way of putting science across. Well, actually it's probably not a good way of putting science across, but it's the way people like to watch it, anyway.

This is from the man who started his TV production career on that very programme. After getting a degree in Electronics with Artificial Intelligence from Sussex University, Jonathan Drori joined the BBC as an electronics engineer. Clamouring for the greasepaint and the lights he joined the Tomorrow's World production team. Now he is executive producer in charge of countless series and is constantly going to meetings to discuss such matters as the BBC's response to interactive technology. (Which, so far, equals – "Err, we don't know, yet.") This hectic workload leaves him little time to actually watch television, something which he readily admits is a problem for a programme-maker.

Stephen Arkell has a journalistic background. He started his career as News Editor on Computer News. After working on Micro Live in the 80's ("It was the BBC's computer programme – it was very basic – how to plug it in and switch it on"), he went on to work on The City Programme for Thames. Then he worked at ITN for five years before becoming Series Producer for The Net.

The programme's presenters included two other computer journalists with more pedigree than a tin of Chum – Ben Woolley and Tony Sullivan.

Ben Woolley's pieces have a definite flavour to them. If The Net is the Top Gear of computing, he's the Jeremy Clarkson of The Net. His smooth, sardonic analysis cuts through the hyperbole and slaughters some of computing's most sacred cows.

Tony Sullivan does the investigative pieces. He's worked on Computer News, Computing and Computer Weekly. He's also done a book with Stephen Arkell, called Open Verdict, about Marconi scientists committing suicide. He's an excellent investigative reporter, providing a harder edge to the programme. In this series he's done pieces on safety critical software used in Sizewell; Neo-Nazi groups using the network to organise and disseminate information; the US government's attempts to control encryption software; and the failure of many government department computer systems, costing the



Editor
Matthew
Stonehouse,
sweating
over a hot
off-line
suite.

taxpayers millions of pounds.

JD: I think it's right that we're doing the news stories, investigative pieces that are newsworthy in their own right. It takes a lot of resources, but I think that it's good that we're doing it.

PCP: Was that your favourite bit of the series?

JD: Mmm, it's hard to say because everything's so different each week. I think my favourite line in the show so far was Jules' 'Happy Haircut'.

SA: My favourite bit was the Sizewell piece, which I produced and directed.

PCP: Totally unbiased opinion there.

SA: Yes. I think Tony presented it very well and I produced and directed it very well. Actually, I think all the pieces are of a very high standard. It's all been my favourite really.

PCP: So you don't see any room for improvement.

SA: No, you can't ever say that about any programme. Hopefully there will be another series of The Net and we'll probably develop it along roughly the same lines, maybe dropping the number of items per programme to three. We may also change the running order, starting with the more cuddly items to make it more user-friendly. We'll still have the hard stuff, but maybe we'll sweeten the pill a little.

Jonathan, ever the top executive, was a little less enthusiastic about the future of the programme.

JD: I don't know if there'll be another series of The Net, we'll have to wait and see how this one does. It's the kind of series that is strongly associated in the potential audience's mind with technical things and difficulty and it's not that difficult a programme. News just has to spread. That's where you come in.

PCP: Does that mean I get a freelance fee from the Beeb?

JD: No.

So much for the future of The Net. How do Jonathan and Stephen see the future of the computer industry?

Will we be mainlining The Net straight into our nervous systems through neural inputs, will Bill Gates be the ruler of the universe, will a CD-ROM game be playable?

JD: The general trends are that computers and networking will get cheaper and cheaper. Information will be readily available in lots of different places where it wasn't before. You'll be able to get access to information from some hand-held device sooner or later, and I imagine that BT and Mercury and every other telecom manufacturer in the world are busy developing these things.

"In the future, will Bill Gates be the ruler of the Universe? Will a CD game be playable?"



your favourite auntie

The Net has been just one part of a campaign by BBC Education to revive its involvement as a major educator on information technology. Jonathan Drori reminisced about the BBC's IT pioneering days in the early 80's: "Our dream is to do for networking what the BBC did for computing back in the 80's."

To this end, the BBC have established the BBC Networking Club, offering low-cost access to the international computer networks. The club offers members a connection to a BBC Bulletin Board, called - get this - 'Auntie'. Auntie contains back-up materials for BBC programmes, allowing interaction with programme-makers and enables communication with educational establishments, other networks and individuals around the country. The press release for this service boasts its part in the interactive revolution - "Auntie will revolutionise broadcasting, turning a previously passive audience into active participants." Well, maybe, maybe not, but the Beeb are at last tapping into something which is fast becoming a mass movement. The target for membership of Auntie was 2,000 by Christmas '94. This number was reached within two weeks of the service opening, and it's still growing. The cost of joining is £25 + VAT with a monthly membership fee of £12 + VAT. Then you just have to pay for the phone call to your nearest connection point: London, Cambridge, Edinburgh, Manchester, Birmingham or Bristol.

For further information contact: Factsheet 1, The Net, PO Box 7, London, W3 6XJ. Tel: 081-576-7799.

I imagine there will be two strata in society, the information rich and the information poor. Before, people could get information from libraries, but I think fewer and fewer things will be published in book form in future.

PCP: So, do you think the BBC should become the public access to these sorts of digital communications?

JD: I suppose so. Something we're looking into very actively here is how we can use the interactive media for educational and entertainment use. We all recognise that CD-ROM, or whatever, is just a stepping-stone to something else. My guess is that the something else is where you've got the information and the interactive bits & pieces at the other end of a telecomm network somewhere, and you just interact with it as you need to. I imagine that CD-ROM will have a very limited lifetime but the techniques that have been used to develop it will turn out to be useful.

PCP: Is The Net part of an aim to prepare the public for the coming of the data highway?

SA: I think we're trying to reflect interest in it and explore it, rather than preparing the public for it. I mean, it's not really here yet. We've done a piece on the information super highway, basically saying 'where is it?' and 'do we need it?'. I don't know if I would want it. Do I want a movie pumped down my telephone lines and do I want to be able to order things from the shops through my TV?

PCP: If it's chocolate, frankly, yes.

SA: I don't know if I do, really. I don't know if people are ready for it. We'll just have to wait and see.

Maybe it's something about not wanting your home invaded by too much information. You can have an information overload. If I've got 20-30 thousand channels on my TV, where do I start?

They're beginning to talk about that in the States. Because there's too much information around, they've started to define people according to whose world view they share. So if you're a Hilary Clinton type of person you can buy her angle on the world. You'll be sent a selection of all the latest news items, movies, analysis, etc. all filtered from the point of view of Hilary Clinton.

PCP: You could get a Bill Gates world view.

We laughed.

SA: Or a John Major. Or Norma.

Then we stopped. It wasn't funny any more.

But fret not, the prospect of 20,000 simultaneous Oprahs, Roseannas and CNNs should not fill you with doom and gloom. This series of The Net featured an interview with Bill Gates in which he let us peek through his rose-tinted Window on the Future According to Bill. It was an uplifting view, because, in this 21st Century nerd's Brave New World plan, this digital onslaught will be calmly and logically controlled by your computer through a few boxes and some (undoubtedly smiley) icons. But, the most exciting and innovative development in Uncle Bill's vision was the advancement in yeast-based foodstuff heat exchange and ejection. Yes, at last, it seems almost within our grasp - a computer-controlled toaster.

The interview was played through Windows using, what I assumed was the Quicktime for Windows application. I expressed my astonishment at the smooth movement and synchronisation of sound and vision.

"Yeah," said Stephen. "We did use Quicktime for Windows. We could have cheated. In principle, you can just take out a picture and zoom it back into any box you want, but we thought, to actually say something, if we're going to be a serious computer programme, you'd best do it the way that you can do it on a desktop. So we actually managed to find... Julian, did we use CD-ROM for the Windows interview?"

"No, it was cheated."

Ho-hum!

"Ah. It was played through a PC though?"

"Yeah, but through a beta link."

But, in the true Bill Gates spirit, Stephen pressed on, undeterred.

"Oh well, one day you'll be able to do it. You'll be able to do it on your toaster too."

PC POWER

Look out for Computing for the Less

Terrified on BBC1, Sundays at 11a.m., and listen out for The Big Byte on Radio

Five Live, on Sundays at 12.15p.m.



This image is used with the kind permission of Psygnosis. It comes from their Microcosm beater, Scavenger IV, due out at the end of the year.

Silicon Dreams

Rated the second largest computer company in the world by Fortune 500, and boasting a massive 76% growth in the last quarter, Silicon Graphics Ltd are fast turning into a force to be reckoned with. Dino Boni took a trip to their British HQ to talk to the people behind some of the most awesome graphics computers of all time.

t started out as a very grey day. After three days of glorious weather in (supposedly) sunny Bournemouth, I was sat in an ancient train working my way to Reading, home of Silicon Graphics Ltd. My mind was reeling with visions of their work at the last ECTS show; 24 bit rendered graphics in real-time, 3-D wire frame modelling in the blink of an eye, all without extra graphics cards and expensive software. Was this the path that the future would take? In the not too distant future, would we all

look back upon these days as the 'prehistoric' age of computers? If the Silicon Graphics range of machines is anything to go by, then the answer is a resounding 'Yes'.

As the train pulled slowly up to Theale station, I came back to reality with a bump. Time to put on my best PR face. I really didn't know quite what to expect. Silicon Graphics, I know, are a fairly large company in the States, but over here things may be quite different. I envisaged a small, presentable office suite. Instead, I found myself at the door of what looked like the result of a fight between a maddened glassblower and a paintbrush in a steel factory. Very impressive indeed. Everything had an American feel to it. Potted plants were everywhere, each one carrying the air of a well-kept entity. After a brief conversation with the receptionist, my guardian angels for the day arrived.

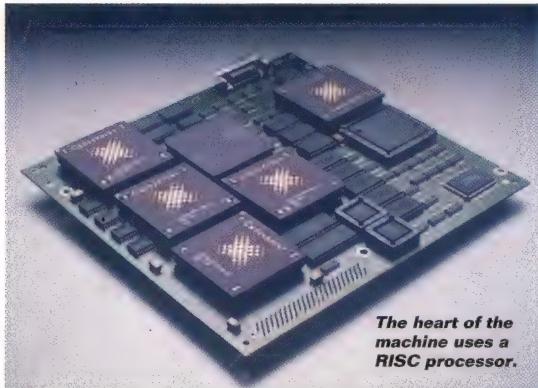
Harold Rippiner (Marketing Communications Manager) and John Hadlow (Product Manager) greeted me with a brief exchange of pleasantries and I was led past row upon row of computers, each one displaying graphics and animation that knock PC Autodesk animations into a cocked hat. I asked, from what small acorn had this mighty silicon oak sprung?

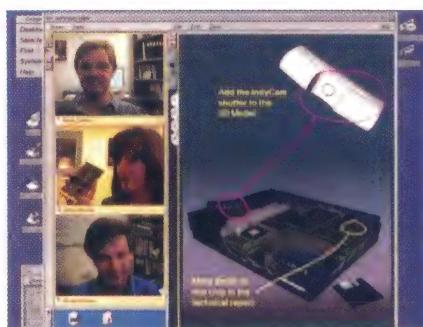
Silicon Graphics Ltd was formed nearly twelve years ago by a young man named Jim Clark. After a protracted stint at Standford University in

California, he developed some new graphics hardware with some friends for good old Uncle Sam. Seeing that there was a huge market for powerful graphics machines, he did a bit more research and launched the company that was to become the biggest buzzword on the current computer games scene.

Jim is no longer with the company and has moved on to pastures new. "He wanted to start something new again," said Harold. "We all wish him the best of luck." Harold is the typical English gentleman. John is American, his accent mellowed by years of English life and culture. "Forgive the mess," said John. "We are moving offices in a week. These have just become too small for our needs." I didn't even notice the rows of neatly stacked boxes on the way in, I explained. I was too busy marvelling at the mind-blowing equipment.

The company itself is based in the States, but there are two offices in England: one in Manchester and their UK headquarters and sales office in Reading. Occasionally, (very occasionally) they get the odd (very odd) customer who comes in off the street. Mike Oldfield (of Tubular Bells fame) did that not too long ago and promptly spent a large amount of money on some Silicon Graphics computers, supposedly for making music videos. Now that's what I call rich.

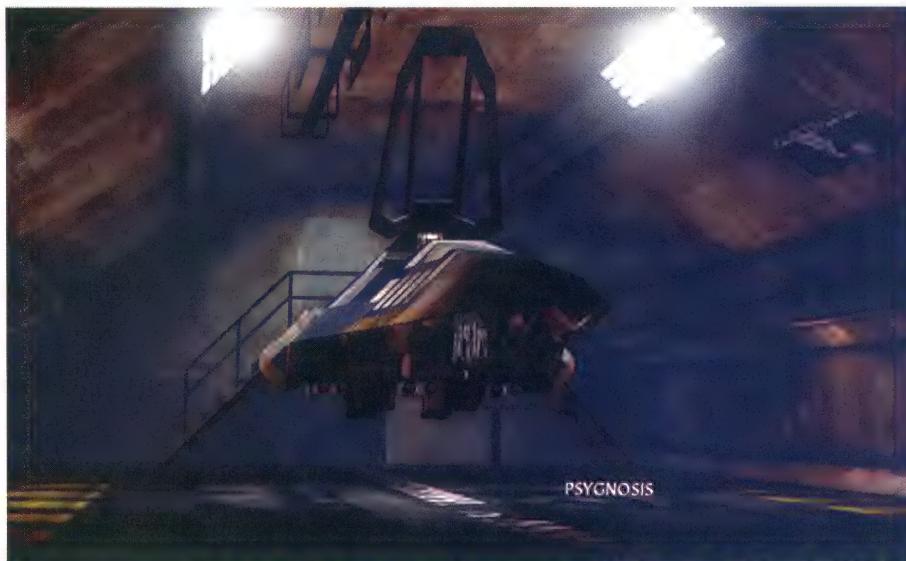




Above: 'In person' video mail in action with four people in a conference.

Left: Silicon Graphics workstations have been used extensively in medicine and drug research.

Below: What the Silicon Graphics' Indy does best - producing photo-quality images using its Alias software.



Silicon Graphics are really just machine manufacturers, but they also do some graphics work for other organisations. Their biggest project to date is unknown ("They're all big!" I was told.) but if media coverage is the scale of success, then the BBC News system must be at the very top of their list.

In case you didn't know, the opening sequences to the new BBC Six and Nine O'Clock News broadcasts are computer generated. The only real parts of the picture are the newscasters themselves and their desk – everything else, including the spotlights above them, is generated with a Silicon Graphics computer.

The machines

Silicon Graphics are producing top-of-the-range machines, so it's fair if they reflect this in their prices. The £6,000 Indy is their entry level machine, but still boasts some impressive specifications. The computer itself is run on a R4000PC RISC processor running at 100 Mhz, but upgrades are available to increase this power even more to either a R4000SC or a R4400SC running at 100 and 150 Mhz respectively. Storage devices include a 630Mb SCSI hard disk and a 21Mb floptical drive that can still read and write 1.44Mb PC and Mac disks.

The unit itself is a vivid purple colour, and is

"Their biggest project to date is unknown, but the BBC News system must be at the top of their list."

thinner than your average desktop PC case. Graphical capabilities are awesome, but this isn't made complicated by the use of user-unfriendly command-line operating systems. The Indy comes with its own GUI (Graphical User Interface) called Indigo Magic. In one environment, Silicon Graphics have combined an intuitive desktop management system with powerful multimedia authoring tools.

Each machine comes complete with a whole plethora of ports and connections as standard. No longer will you need to buy expensive add-on cards when you want to be able to process video or sound. It even comes with its own digital video camera, called IndyCam, but more of that later.

The Indy can quite happily emulate an IBM PC or even an Apple Mac, and still have power



to spare. Then again, how many people will spend £6,000 to use Microsoft Word? Not many, I'll grant you. No, the real job of the Indy is to process and produce graphics, and lots of them.

Life, the universe and pictures

The Indy runs a 19-inch monitor at a resolution of 1280 X 1024 without any perceivable amount of slowdown. Not impressed? OK, how about 24-bit true colour graphics without even a pause for disk access? Still not impressed? Some people are so difficult to please.

All right then. Imagine you're the artist for a racing game that is going to use pre-rendered tracks that will be stored on CD. On a PC, you'd probably use a package akin to Autodesk or 3D Studio. After designing the track as a 3-D model, you would instruct the program to render the finished article frame by frame. This could take anything from 3 to 12 hours to do, and if the result is not perfect, you have to go through this process all over again. Not so on an Indy. The entire cycle will take around 10 minutes, so you'd be hard pushed to make a cup of coffee while you're waiting. (You must make a complex cup of coffee - ed.) Now that's what I call power.

Another demonstration of the Indy's performance is the ability to perform picture manipulation in real time. At last April's ECTS I was shown a picture of a dog. OK, it was a 24-bit picture, but nothing impressive in itself. However, if you were to click on this picture and hold the mouse button down, you could 'pull' the image out as if it were made of rubber. Let go of the mouse button, and the stretched part of the image would bounce back into shape, and this was all done in *real time*.

Networks and other animals

The Indy is still perceived to be a workstation and it comes with built-in network capability, as all workstations should. An ISDN port at the rear of the machine is its connection with other machines, but this is one network that isn't limited to file-sharing.

Normal networks run some sort of e-mail (electronic mail) package. This is where every user on the system is given a unique ID so that users can send files, text messages and, more recently, audio messages. The Indy can go much further than this, almost to the point of BT's so-called 'Video Phone'.

Each Indy is supplied with a small unit called the IndyCam. This is a miniature digital colour TV camera set into a neat little case. It sits on top of your monitor as you work, quietly observing the world around it. As soon as someone wants to speak to you, it leaps into action, displaying your work-weary features for all to see.

So, instead of sending text messages through the network, you can now speak to your fellow workers, via the IndyCam. The camera sends your image to the caller's computer and vice versa. Audio is also sent at the same time, and can be sampled at anything from 14Mhz right up to and beyond CD audio standard. What you end up with is the first practical Video Phone. It isn't restricted to person-to-person calls either. Up to four people can form a video conference, even if they are separated by meters or miles.

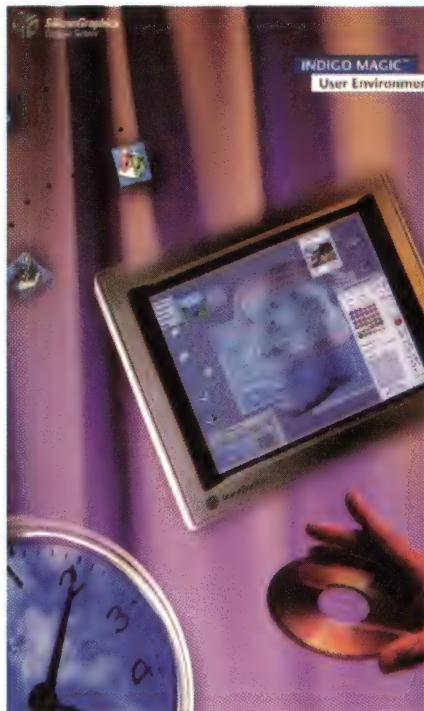
Next to the video window is the electronic equivalent of a Post-it pad. This scratchpad can be used to send images, text or a combination of both to other conferences or just to the other end of the video phone. Images can be drawn on the scratch pad and will appear on the other machines as you draw with only a small amount of delay. You can even control the other person's computer while they watch.

The flexible power of the Silicon Graphics networks is a wonderful thing, but it also has a major downside. Because you can totally integrate with someone else's computer, it is quite possible to sneak a connection with someone's workstation while they're busy, and turn on their camera without them knowing!

This caused many arguments about privacy in the workplace, until one bright spark came up with the most low-tech solution to a very high-tech problem I've ever seen. A plastic slide was incorporated into the IndyCam, to slide across the camera lens, totally blocking its view. Whoever thought up that idea probably got a very fat pay cheque the next month.

Applications

The most obvious use for such powerful graphics machines is for special effects in films. The American based company Industry Light and Magic have around 60 workstations and have used them to spectacular effect in films such as The Hunt for Red October and Terminator II. Their most recent project has been the biggest, and most expensive yet. Steven Spielberg commissioned them to do the entire set of special effects for his blockbuster movie, Jurassic Park, something that would not have been possible without the power of the Indigo

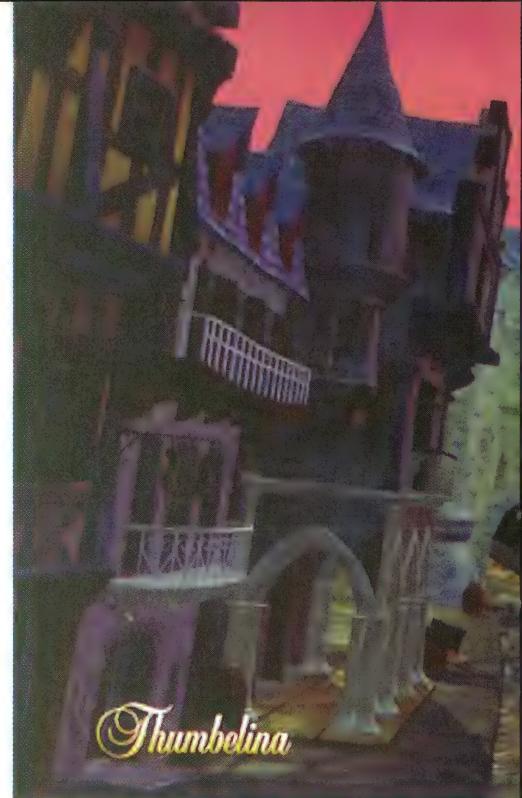


range of Silicon Graphics machines.

Their new venture, JEDI (Joint Environment for Digital Imaging) will combine Silicon Graphics' visual computing technology with ILM's world-leading visual effects facilities to create innovative digital imagery for the entertainment industry. According to George Lucas, who was the creative and directive force behind the Star Wars series of films, JEDI will make broadcast-quality digital imagery more affordable in the entertainment business. I wonder where he got the new acronym from?

Lucas says, "The alliance will be important to the industry. Working with Silicon Graphics engineers, ILM's artists and technicians will accelerate the development of the technology necessary to explore new creative possibilities. It is a dawning of a new age, and ILM & Silicon Graphics are dedicated to leading that charge into the future".

On the day of the interview, a conference was



being held in Silicon Graphics' spacious offices. This was for a new, radical application that is still in the experimental stage. They're calling it Virtual Surgery. It enables medical students and experienced doctors alike to practise operations without the need to train using a human corpse. Presumably, the Virtual Reality in this application doesn't include virtual odours.

What about games?

In August 1993, Nintendo and Silicon Graphics announced an agreement that is intended to transform video entertainment in the home. Together, the two companies are developing a new 64-bit console called Project Reality.

This is due to be unveiled in the arcades later this year and then in the home by 1995. The heart of the machine will be a version of the MIPS Multimedia Engine, a chip-set consisting of a 64-bit MIPS RISC processor, a graphics co-processor and Application Specific Integrated Circuits. The graphics processor and the ASIC chips will provide Project Reality with the muscle that it will need to compete against some of the other planned 'super consoles'. The games themselves will be written on the Indy, which is an ideal platform for Nintendo authors wishing to create applications for Project Reality.

The power of the Indigo series, and the relatively low price of the Indy, make its usefulness in the real world unprecedented. It was only recently that software companies started using them to help produce their games. Both Howard and John feel that the way forward will be with machines similar to the Indy, but the new breed of consoles will come close.

As far as the PC is concerned, the only Silicon Graphics images we're likely to see are on CD-ROM, usually as the intro to games. The PC can't deliver the sheer graphical processing power required to produce the images itself. So, for the moment, we can only marvel at these mini-movies. Even then, your average PC is hard pushed just to display these images at a reasonable frame rate.

"I think that games are becoming too graphically-biased," said John "and this is distracting developers from producing more playable games. If you take a look at some of the games in the early '80's, they had to be incredibly playable, simply because you couldn't do much with 48K of memory and four colours".

"The PC and the console market are





Below: The Indycam is ideal for 'in-person' communication, but it can also double up as an image grabber.
Left: More Alias artwork.



completely separate," he continued. "Project Reality won't be seen in the home until 1995 at the earliest, so the PC has a few years to get its act together. Most people buy a PC to do some sort of application work, such as word processing. After a while, they discover that they also have a computer that's pretty good at playing games, and this is where the PC games market has sprung from".

Many well-known software developers have bought Indy machines, or are in the process of buying them. Already on the list are big names such as Argonaut and Psygnosis and many more developers are seeing the benefits of such a powerful workhorse. Team 17 are the latest company to purchase a few machines, but their use at the moment is strictly limited to producing intros for floppy and CD based games.

TV for the masses

Silicon Graphics' current project is with Time Warner Cable, producing a new kind of interactive TV. 4,000 homes in Orlando, Florida are being used to test the plausibility of such a project. A cut-down version of the Indy machine will be hooked into a server via an ISDN line (ISDN is a special phone line for high speed data transfer) and then connected to a domestic television set. Users will be able to access over one thousand films via the server, which will compress them at its end, send them down the ISDN line and leave the TV unit to uncompress them at the other end. Not impressed? You will be when I tell you that the quality will be indistinguishable from normal TV. (High definition TV is a problem, not because the hardware can't handle it, but because there aren't enough high definition sets around at the moment to create a market.)

The project is aimed at setting a new standard for television communications. Time Warner Cable serve 7.1 million homes in 36 states, so the growth potential is enormous. The next step will be a new kind of 'interactive' shopping channel, where viewers will be able to look at the product from any angle, call up technical specifications etc. While this is still a year or so away, Silicon Graphics and Time Warner Cable are confident that it will revolutionise viewing habits.

"The system will allow cable television viewers to tap into new worlds of information and communication, with all services accessed from the home television set. Time Warner is the perfect partner, ensuring that these services are created and delivered to the consumer. Silicon Graphics' technology is making interactive digital cable a reality, providing the huge amounts of power needed for the integration of graphics, images and sound," said Steve Webb, UK Marketing Manager.

"We anticipate that digital interactive TV will be one of the largest markets for computer technology, due to the emerging competitive environment for telecommunications, combined with the lower cost of technology and networking capabilities," he concluded.

As ever, money seems to be the watch-word, but in amongst the dollar signs springing up in executives' eyes, there is a real feeling of achievement. An achievement that could change the world.

"It won't be long," said John "before something similar to the interactive TV experiment takes over entertainment in the home. No longer will you have a TV, a video, a hi-fi and a computer or console. Everything will be controlled from one unit. All manner of media will be on offer from films to games; even multi-player games. Silicon Graphics are going to revolutionise the way people perceive computers. I think you'll find that the next few years will be very exciting for the entertainment industry as a whole."

It seems we're back to that old chestnut of the information highway. Maybe it's already a reality for the Mike Oldfields of this world, but for the rest of us mere mortals, my advice is – if you want to stay in touch – start saving up. **PC POWER**



Indy tech specifications

CPU MODULE

R4000PC @ 100MHz
R4000SC @ 100MHz
R4400SC @ 150MHz

GRAPHICS

8-bit planes

1280 x 1024/1024 x 768
up to 72Mhz refresh rate

24-bit planes

1280 x 1024/1024 x 768
up to 72Mhz refresh rate

MONITOR

Colour 19 inch

1280 x 1024 resolution
60, 72 and 76Mhz refresh rates

Colour 16 inch

1280 x 1024 resolution
60, 72 and 76Mhz refresh rates

Colour 14 inch

1024 x 768 resolution
70Mhz refresh rate

INPUT/OUTPUT

2 serial

1 parallel

1 ethernet

Fast SCSI-2

ISDN

Stereovision stereoscopic glasses

MEMORY

16Mb to 256Mb

MASS STORAGE

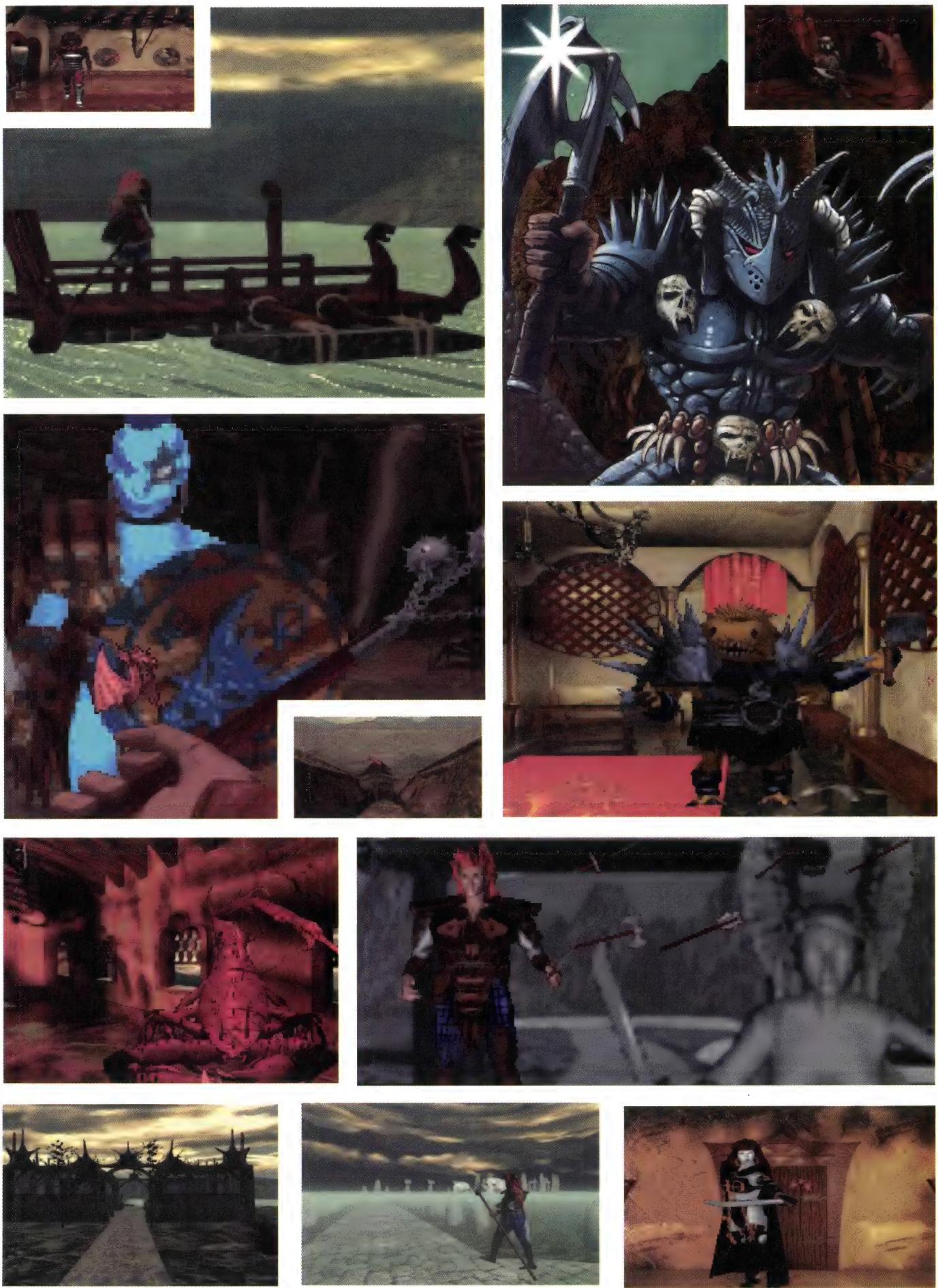
21Mb floptical drive
535Mb hard disk
630Mb hard disk
1.0Gb hard disk

GIO EXPANSION

Two GIO-32 slots

INPUT DEVICES

PS2 (tm) style keyboard and mouse
Analogue microphone
IndyCam digital colour video camera



Cryo-Genius

As ubiquitous as The Smiths in Select, or Dylan in Q, are CD-ROM gurus Cryo in PC Power. Dave Westley met them at their Paris based HQ, finding them at work on the creation of a new legend.

t's hard to believe, but Cryo have only been around since January 1992. The quantity of media coverage, the quality of their products, and their LucasArts-like reputation belie their sweet-toothed infancy. Their success is 100% due to the risk they took with CD-ROM – "From day one, we decided we wanted to be a CD-ROM only company, simply because we wanted to be a known entity on the market. It wouldn't have made sense for us to produce floppy games. There are a host of companies doing that very well already."

The interviewee is none other than Jean Marciel Lefranc, director of *Megarace* and now *Dragon Lore* (AKA *Dragon Tales*). He's French, intense and very, very enthusiastic about his work and the CD-ROM market in general, counter-balancing the scepticism prevalent in most other development teams. "You can keep hoping that something better will come along, but CD-ROM is happening now, and you need to cater for it today if you want it to develop tomorrow. What we're trying to do is to use the technology now in its best possible way, and not wait until it gets better – otherwise it may never happen at all."

Not even a bit of well meant prompting and prodding – 'it's a bit slow, access times are awful, etc.' – could deflate his bloated enthusiasm. "CD-ROM has been very good to us so I don't think that there's anything that I really dislike about it. I think the key point most people miss is that CD-ROM games are necessarily going to be different from those that have been working with floppy and hard drives. It's a very different medium, after all, and those people with CD-ROM drives are older, perhaps they don't have the same amount of time to spend playing games. They want instant pleasure playing something with very high production values – and that's really what we're trying to do. I know that there's a big controversy as to whether you can do a playable game on CD-ROM, but I personally think that that is the wrong question to ask. It should be – can you do something that is really entertaining for people using CD-ROM?"

Megarace seems to indicate that the answer is a resounding 'Yes' – and that the company know exactly what kind of game the CD-ROM junkies want. "Though there are less CD-ROM owners, the people who do own them tend to be a lot

more hungry for games, so when a good CD product is released it can sell a lot more than a floppy product, especially in the States. Producing that kind of product means developing a CD-ROM specific title, though. You can't just port something over with a few irrelevant bits and pieces and hope it'll sell well – it won't. The kind of product that we're doing would be impossible on floppy. The medium just couldn't cope with the quantity of data. Getting the level of detail and the rendering in either *Megarace* or *Dragon Lore* would be impossible..."

Dragon Lore is a graphic adventure, par excellence. The rendered images Jean refers to are everywhere, not just in the background, but covering every stone, sword, monster and fairy in the game's impressive 3-D landscape. The press release on the game reads: "Past attempts to create first person perspective games have been largely simplistic. Objects appear to lack depth, because many games simply slap bitmaps onto flat polygon surfaces. Walking through one of these environments is like being in a room filled with cardboard cut-outs. *Dragon Lore* features true 3-D rendered objects that the player can interact with, walk around and view from any angle..." And, for once, it's not hyperbole. Some of the monsters that you'll come across have an alarming degree of three-dimensionality – the scorpions in the castle particularly, appear almost to be holograms.

Given the size of the game, and quality of objects within it, the discovery that everything had been rendered with 3D Studio came as something of a surprise. I asked whether that had meant long, tiring waits for sections of the game to be rendered. The answer was an equally surprising no. "The slowness of 3D Studio is related to the PC doing the work rather than the 3D Studio application itself. What we do is bump up the power by putting together a network – so we can do our rendering on 50 different machines at one time. We're also moving onto Pentium..."

"Silicon Graphics would be faster but 3D Studio will remain the best possible choice as long as we have to do games on VGA. When we move to higher definitions, which will take us to broadcast definition, then we will use Silicon Graphics workstations. At the moment, in a ratio of quality to price, Autodesk's system wins hands down. With the kind of resolution needed with VGA products it doesn't really make sense to spend the money on high-end graphics stations. When you see *Commander Blood*, for example, and you see the graphics degraded for PC CD-ROM, it's a bit of a shame. Even with 3D Studio we've had to spend a lot of time degrading the graphics to allow a player to make them work with a 386. We have, however, just started to work on a product to come out in 1995 that will use Silicon Graphics." (*Scavenger* for Virgin.)

The *Dragon Lore* storyline takes its inspiration

from Star Wars, according to James Morris, PR Manager at Mindscape. It's a classic tale of good versus evil. "A very long time ago", a group of dragons and knights fled a war-torn world to take refuge in a remote valley, kept safe by a (presumably very big) wall. After a thousand or so years of serenity, however, one bad apple rose from amongst the knights to end the peace. You're given the unenviable task of stopping him in his tracks.

The game will be split into two CDs, to be released separately. It may sound a little exploitative but, according to Jean, there's a very good reason for it. "Half-way through the project we realised that there was just too much story to be worked onto one CD. There were also some new tricks that we wanted to use on the programming side (that are going to be available for *Dragon Lore 2*) that we didn't think we'd have enough time to use on *Dragon Lore 1*. It's a mistake to spend more than 12 months on a single project because, by the time you release the game, it's getting outdated. So, we want to release the first one which can be amazing right now, and then work on some new stuff so we can release a new game that will still be equally amazing in a few months time. There are new things being learned all the time – especially in compression techniques."

Dragon Lore has actually been in development for more than 12 months now. "We started work in April last year – so we've been doing it for just over a year now. It should be finished in early June – we're really proud of it. We went for something where we had no real idea if what we were doing was possible and we've pulled it off.

Below: Jean Marciel Lefranc is the director of *Dragon Lore*. **Opposite page:** The product of over a years work – one of the best looking games ever is finally nearing completion.



MPEG bound?

Last time we spoke to Cryo they said that they were going to do an MPEG version of *Megarace*. Apparently it's still going ahead, and drawing near to the end of development.

"We are doing an MPEG version of *Megarace* - mainly because we're doing a 3DO version of the game. We haven't decided about *Dragon Lore* yet. If we don't it won't be because it's too difficult - it's very easy - but because there wouldn't be a lot of added value on the product with MPEG. *Dragon Lore* looks beautiful enough as it is - I don't think it would really be worthwhile."

"Dragon Lore has that 7th Guest quality of being a 'must have' for PC owners."

At the moment you can move around, but there are no puzzles yet. That's the tweaking at the end. We've finished the main engine and now we've just got to put the various puzzles in each of the rooms."

Those puzzles are said to form three different types. "The first one is to fight against the monsters with a lot of different weapons and combat strategies. The second one is the adventure one of walking around and talking to various characters and having to solve some dialogue-based puzzles. The third one will be a pure RPG element requiring the player to find scattered objects."

"The game will be very different to a game like *Myst*. I personally don't think that they concentrated enough on giving the feel to the player that he can go anywhere and interact with characters that are in the backdrop - which is something that we've tried to do in *Dragon Lore*. Here you can move around in 3-D and when you're in a room you can move to a lot more places. The difference between the two can be summed up by saying that whilst *Myst* has been very appealing to CD-ROM owners, *Dragon Lore* has a lot more chance of appealing to both CD-ROM owners and to floppy owners alike. It's got that *7th Guest* quality of being a 'must have' and, hopefully, will make a lot more PC owners into CD-ROM owners."

Some of the game's sprites also need finishing off. At the moment there's a mix of the most beautifully rendered creatures ever seen, and some infinitely cruder monsters. I asked how finished the version I'd seen was. The answer - not very. Apparently, the cruder looking creatures had just been put in for reference purposes - for testing the game. "We're still working on the animation for the more difficult, human looking sprites..."

The animation and the artwork is 80% of a game like *Dragon Lore* - indeed 80% of the *Dragon Lore* team consists of artists, according to Jean. The exact size of the team has varied between four and eight people, depending upon the particular stage the game has been on. "At the moment we're working flat out to get the game finished on time - so the team is at full strength. Virtually all of Cryo is living, breathing and sleeping *Dragon Lore*."

From what we've seen so far, the effort is going to be more than worth it and will certainly give Cryo some of the confidence they require to move onto the next stage of world domination. Earlier in the interview I'd asked whether the company would one day like to publish their own games. The answer was a resounding 'yes'. "Cryo will have their own label one day... but it will take a couple of years. It's really just a matter of having enough really profitable titles in order to give you sufficient resources to enable you to stand on your own two feet - we're still at the stumbling stage at the moment."

PC POWER



Dragon Lore's developers Fabrice Bernard (left) and Emmanuel Sorsans (above right). Above and Right: The monsters in Dragon Lore are built as models before being digitised into the game.



future

As leading CD-ROM developers, Cryo are very much at the forefront of the technological march. Do Cryo see a bright future? "Well, I'll admit I am looking forward to the new wave machines. I'm looking forward to being able to produce broadcast quality images with SVGA rather than VGA. That step is really going to make an awful lot of difference to a game."

I asked Jean if he'd heard of Argonaut's new chip. "You mean the add-on to the graphics card? Yeah I've heard of it and I know that Creative Labs are working on something very similar. I think when Sega and Sony release their real-time 3-D based machines, we will see similar things in the form of add-on cards for the PC. It's worth keeping hold of a healthy dose of scepticism about all the claims being made, though."

ratings

If you've read our news section you'll know that ELSPA have finally agreed to adopt a European-wide ratings system. Jean is suitably cynical. "Ratings are really ambiguous. The official view is that there shouldn't be any ratings and the unofficial view is 'let's get our game rating really restrictive because it will appeal to the under 16's'. It's actually like the film business - the higher the rating, the more that teenagers will find it appealing. So I think that if there's no rating, that's fine with me, and if there is a rating, well, we'll just use it as a marketing tool like everyone else will."

"*Scavenger* is going to push the boundaries, anyway. Even at this stage it contains a lot of graphic violence and sex - we're using a lot of digitisation. None of it will be gratuitous though - there will be a reason for anything and everything we do."

titles

Dune II (Virgin, out now)
Megarace (Mindscape, out now)
Dragon Lore (Mindscape, June)
Lost Eden (Virgin, November)
Commander Blood (TBA)
Scavenger (Virgin, 1995)
Two new Mindscape projects (1995)

Stuart Wynne: Reality Check on the PC

Opinion



In the era of news management and spin control, the PR event is always the favoured outlet for news. You hire somewhere big and slightly weird, throw in lots of booze and then reel off the PR spiel under the arclights. At the recent ECTS, Intel invited us into the major league of corporate hype, a Looking-Glass world where reality means nothing and even the most staid, conservative of companies can be revealed as truly 'revolutionary'.

Arriving late, I at first thought Intel were subtly sending themselves up, a *Spitting Image*-inspired caricature of John Major droning on about the wonders of greyness with wince-inducing obviousness. Then, suddenly, a brace of EA/Intel shocktroopers rollerskated on stage to rescue us all in a flurry of fireworks and exploding PCs. I ended up feeling like Captain Kirk in one of those parallel world episodes, lost in an alternate universe with the same cheap sets but a radically different reality. In this alternate world, Intel was a hip, Tory-hating Body Shop kind of company and all those old, sluggish PCs were by some other company entirely. Rather than proudly recounting Intel's long domination of the PC market, the projection screens showed PC after PC being blown apart to hearty applause from watching Intel reps. In this alternate universe, Intel was a brand-new company. A bomb-throwing, rollerskating revolutionary company, in fact.

To drive the point home, the head of Intel UK took to the stage: "The 486 brought the world 2p," he boasted. Cue baffled British audience. "Personal productivity." The next 2p we could look forward to was "Personal Pleasure," the Intel/EA partnership for a better, Pentium-based world. Back in the real world of the ECTS, the PC was certainly the platform of choice for developers. This, and the huge, installed base of PCs, has led to much triumphalism in some PC mags, scoffing at any possible competition. But leaving aside the fact that the PC audience is supposed to be a bit more mature than the 'my machine is better than yours' mob, there isn't actually a huge amount to be smug about. In the first place, many of the people coming to the PC are doing so for negative rather than positive reasons – every other machine seems doomed! And secondly, the technology revolutionising new consoles applies equally to PCs.

RISC is an especially dangerous technology to Intel because it strikes directly at the heart of its hegemony over the PC. While other technologies have usually been absorbed by the PC, ever more complex CISC CPUs are at the heart of Intel's vision of the future. But according to RISC fans, their simpler chip designs are inherently faster, cheaper and easier to scale up. Their concept of a PC rests not so much on hardware, as on the Operating System and software. PowerMac is currently spearheading the RISC-based challenge and, despite the lack of immediately available native software, is garnering impressive support. A recent PCW review concluded; "Apple's Macs are poised to take the lead over PCs, not just in ease of use and built-in features but, for the first time, in price/performance too." Byte, an American computer heavyweight, opines: "a growing number of analysts believe RISC is the future." And remember, PowerMac is the first, conservative implementation of PowerPC. IBM's likely to be a lot more aggressive on price and performance.

The PowerPC challenge to the traditional PC is, however, only skirting around the same basic PC concept. Similar technology makes possible a far more radical challenge. Sony's PS-X and Nintendo's Project Reality are both RISC-based machines developed from the ground-up for ultra low-cost, multimedia graphics handling. This is the next-generation performance the PC keeps hyping for teleconferencing and presentations, not to mention games, but which it delivers only at exorbitant expense. As more and more costly hardware gets crammed into those ISA slots, the question arises – 'Why not simply add a keyboard and operating system to a PS-X?'

Stifle your giggles and remember the fact that when the personal computers first appeared, they were regarded with little less than contempt by mainframe mandarins. And the PC today is even more wedded to restricted architecture than mainframes ever were. A profound paradigm shift on the scale of the PC itself is certainly possible. "Eventually people will ask, 'Can I get my word processor, spreadsheet and a few other other applications on this other platform?' As soon as they can, they'll stop buying PCs," commented SGI's former CEO, Jim Clark.

The demise of the PC is obviously neither imminent nor in any way certain. Technologies such as B-Render, Windows 4 and P6 offer fantastic potential for the PC, but believing the PC's future is immune to technological challenge is something only a PR man would believe. PC owners, used to the constant and costly rate of upgrading their hardware, will have little cause for concern. If new technology does replace the PC, it will be vastly more powerful, easier to use and considerably cheaper. Games should be better not only because of the technology, but because at last PC games could be sold into a true mass market. Deprived of the vast difference in platform costs, *Mario* and *Elite 2* will finally go head to head in the sales charts and the results should be fascinating. In the meantime, the PC remains a remarkably well-supported platform from which to observe the chaos out of which this prospective new hardware might, possibly, emerge.

"A brace of EA/Intel shocktroopers rollerskated on stage in a flurry of exploding PCs."

Virtually Yours

The Lawnmower Man portrayed Virtual Reality as a demon and a delight. Dino Boni reveals the reality of Virtual entertainment.

Leicester – home of two Universities and thousands of students. It is also home to one of the most rapidly expanding sectors of the computer industry since the advent of the home computer – Virtual Reality. VR has been the subject of continued speculation since its release a few years ago, and has been seen as something of a media revolution.

Virtuality Entertainment Limited is housed on a large industrial estate away from the hustle and bustle of city life. After experiencing Leicester's huge town centre, this place in itself seemed almost a virtual reality. The externals of the office unit gave a hint of the technological marvels that lay inside.

My guide through the future was Helen Horner, PR Manager of Virtuality Entertainment Ltd. She led me through to the demonstration room – a large office with two sleek-looking pods sat in one corner. Before I let myself go in their world of virtual pleasures, I did my duty and sat down with Helen to talk about the serious business of entertainment.

British innovation and business may be failing in Major's eyes, (or because of Major's brain – or lack of it) but there are still a few people who can

beat the propaganda of doom and gloom and create their own green shoots of recovery. The Virtuality Group is a completely British success story (even their US office was staffed with British citizens until recently). Virtuality Entertainment Limited was formed by four young men around six years ago. It started out life as 'W. Industries' and was run from a garage for some time. Almost all business success stories seem to have a garage connected with their past, a phenomenon that could be worth looking into, if anyone could find the time.

After a few years of trading, the company was floated on the stock exchange as Virtuality Group PLC, which turned out to be more successful than the managing director's highest expectations. There are many companies under the banner of Virtuality Group PLC. The company I was visiting is responsible for the making, distribution and selling of the Virtuality entertainment game, which was first previewed on BBC's Tomorrow's World a few years ago. The first games (or 'First Generation', as they are known) started a video game revolution, just as Space Invaders did way back in 1977.

Virtual Reality derives its name from its purpose – the sole use of a Virtual Reality machine is to make you part of another world, of

another reality. Suffice to say, you can't jump into a computer-generated world with your entire being and until we learn how the brain interprets signals from our eyes, ears and touch-sensitive nerves, Virtual Reality has to be transmitted through our senses externally.

There are two types of Virtuality machine; a stand up pod and a sit-down console. The stand-up pod has a hinged gate that allows access to the machine and also serves as a barrier to stop you falling out while you're playing the game. The headset, or Vissette, is completely unique to Virtuality. Inside the headset are the screens that project the virtual world into your eyes. Also incorporated into the Vissette are a pair of stereo headphones for the music and sound effects and a microphone to pick up your voice, as some of the games (together with a nifty piece of add-on hardware) allow you to speak to other players in a disguised voice. A joystick offers all the controls you'll need to play the game, but instead of having a fixed limit of travel, the Virtuality Joystick can be moved anywhere at all. The software will detect where it is and alter the images on the screen accordingly. Similarly, the headset detects the movements of your head and alters the images that your eyes see. You can look around by just moving your head. It's quite possible to shoot something that's behind you while you're looking in the opposite direction. A great bonus for show-offs, if you ask me.

The sit-down version of Virtuality incorporates all the elements of the stand-up pod, but with one major exception. The joystick is mounted on the console itself and does not offer the degree of freedom that the stand-up pod allows. This isn't a bad thing, simply because it would be impractical to play a flight-sim Virtuality game while still on your feet. You see, Virtuality Entertainment Ltd have thought of everything.

The first generation of Virtuality machines were billed as the new era of video games. This was true in many respects. They did offer something completely different from anything else on the market. Unfortunately, there was a price to pay for this great leap of innovation. The first generation machines used an Amiga to produce the stereographic images for the headset, and were understandably slow. Many



Left: Would you get into an argument with this man? In real life, I'd run for it, but in Virtuality, it's a different matter. As you can see, the graphics have improved to the point of including texture mapping on the polygon shapes.



people who played the first games commented on the graphics and their comments were usually along the lines of "I like it, but the graphics are so slow. It makes you feel like you are sitting in an aeroplane with a massive hangover!" The new, second generation of machines have blown this problem away by using industrial speed PCs with specialised graphics cards to produce the visor images.

Another major problem with the first machines was the size of the headset. It weighed a massive three kilograms and was a real nightmare to wear. The new headset, named Vissette 2, is much lighter and compact and, weighing in at only 645 grams, feels no heavier than a large pair of headphones. Everything has been improved for the second generation of games, including the software itself. The new machines are much more responsive and, coupled with the increased speed derived from

the muscular PCs sat inside the units, they deliver a much more realistic experience.

The graphics have also been improved no end. Previously, only simple filled-polygon graphics were used in the games. Amigas are pretty good at producing these, but have nowhere near the speed required to create a realistic virtual world. The PCs inside the second generation machines now produce graphics that are not only much faster, but are of better quality from start to finish. Texture maps are used extensively throughout the game, giving the virtual world even more polish than before.

Despite what many people imagine, the screens in front of your eyes do no harm at all. After a few small adjustments to the headset to focus the image, your eyes slowly get used to having an object so close to them. The images presented by the headset are very sharp and clear, a testimony to the advanced LCD

technology that is used in the Vissette 2. The image updates very quickly, and is so convincing that you duck involuntarily if an object passes overhead.

Both machines are built to very high specifications, and have a sleek, curved and appealing grey finish. They look the part, and this is one of the reasons people will play them. There are also a number of add-on units that can be bought to increase the attraction of the games, offering new features for players. The Replay Console is a stand-alone monitor that replays (hence the name) highlights from the game which players can watch after they've finished. The Wideview System is a real crowd-pleaser. A TV displays live action from the game so spectators can watch it as it's being played.

The Vocaliser is really an add-on luxury that gives Virtuality the edge over more conventional games systems. Players can speak to each other,

to hurl abuse or offer useful information, in a disguised voice. The Vocaliser unit takes the player's voice, alters it within its circuitry and then feeds it to other players via the headphones in their headsets. If you've ever wanted to sound like an alien, then find a Virtuality Centre with one of these gizmos installed. It's quite incredible.

Up to four pods can be linked together, but the most common set-up is with two pods. If a potential buyer wants something different, then it can be arranged to suit their specifications. Virtuality Entertainment can create packages for a purchaser that will provide them with everything they need to set up a Virtuality Centre. As for the cost, each machine costs £25,000, and that's just for the pod itself! If you wanted to start up a centre, then you wouldn't get much change from £75,000. A pretty hefty price tag for a game perhaps? Maybe so, but Helen says that the average pay-off period is less than a year and after that, every game fee is pure profit.

Another feature that justifies the high price of the machines is their upgrade capability. The games for the Virtuality pods are designed and written at the UK offices. There are currently three games available for the new system, and more are being written as we go to print. This is one of the benefits that Virtuality has over conventional arcade games. "Take Ridge Racer from Namco," said Helen. "It may be a very impressive game, but once you've bought one and it's been sat in your arcade for six months, everyone has lost interest in it. With Virtuality, the games can be constantly upgraded. When one game starts to fail, then you can try another one. The pod itself is just hardware. It's the games that really make Virtuality stand out from the crowd".

Definition

The term Virtual Reality has been defined many, many times over the past few years, with each definition varying in some subtle way from the previous one. I asked Helen how Virtuality Entertainment defined the term, and what it meant to them as a company.

"Our definition has to be from the entertainment perspective. We define Virtual Reality as a system that is completely immersive and gives you 360 degrees of entertainment.

"She was bouncing around in her wheelchair. Afterwards she told us that the game had given her a sense of freedom that she hadn't felt in a long time."

When you are sat playing a conventional game on a TV screen or monitor, everything is presented to you as if you are just a viewer in another world. With Virtual Reality, you are actually inside that world. There are things all around you, in every conceivable direction. There's only so many types of games that can be played on a conventional TV system, but with Virtual Reality you can do more or less anything," said Helen. Obviously, she has rattled off that PR speech many times, but that doesn't mean that it isn't impressive to listen to.

The Lawnmower Man

The success of Virtual Reality has been attributed to many things, but most people in the industry feel that Steven King's *The Lawnmower Man* had a lot to do with it. In case you haven't seen the film, it is set a few years into the future where an eminent scientist is using Virtual Reality to increase intelligence in monkeys. After a few successful attempts, he is disillusioned with his company's plans to use the intelligent chimps as weapons and so starts trying out his process on a young man with learning difficulties in his neighbourhood. The young man's intelligence increases beyond all expectations; with catastrophic results. I asked Helen if the film *The Lawnmower Man*, gave people a rather perverse idea of Virtual Reality.

"The Lawnmower Man did a lot of damage for Virtual Reality in general. The images portrayed in the film lifted the public's expectations of Virtual Reality far above anything that is possible at the moment and so they are inevitably disappointed when they play a Virtuality game.

"The fact of the matter is that Virtual Reality games are very expensive to produce. What we've tried to do is get them to a specification that will compete with the current forms of

entertainment and to do that, sacrifices have to be made in terms of computing power. The graphics for the film were all produced on very high specification Silicon Graphics workstations, and there's just no way that any computer, at the moment, can produce those sort of images in real time.

"We could increase the power of the Virtuality computers, but that in turn would put the cost of each machine into orbit and that is something we don't want to do. If no-one buys our machines, no-one will play them. There has to be a limit somewhere."

The appeal of Virtuality isn't limited to teenagers. Everyone wants to play it, according to Helen. "We put a two pod set-up into a pub for an evening to see what kind of reaction we would get to the second generation of machines. Many people were very sceptical, but there was one man who must've been around 80 years old who wanted to play it continuously! It was incredible, we couldn't get him off it!"

Virtual freedom

Virtual Reality could have many uses, but the main one for the moment seems to be entertainment. Virtuality Group is working on a number of projects for educational use, but one of the most pleasing spin-offs of the Virtuality game is that it can offer someone freedom of movement, even if they can't move themselves.

The stand-up pods can detect the headset and joystick within a five foot radius of the machine. This means that a disabled person in a wheelchair can play the game. Helen recalls a time when a young girl (who was wheelchair-bound) came to try out the game.

"We had a girl in a wheelchair come into the office to do some filming. She was helping produce a video about the difficulties that



Above and Left: Dino gets to grips with a second generation 2000SU pod. The headset is a pleasure to wear and is nowhere near as heavy as the original. The monitor on the left-hand picture displays live action from the game as you play.



The 2000SU stand-up pod in all its glory. The yellow lines you can see towards the bottom left-hand edge of this picture are part of the network connection casing. Everything is very sleek, shiny and erm, grey.



Above: A Replay Console view of a rather violent game of Zone Hunter.



The Replay Station provides highlights of games for players and spectators alike.



disabled people face when it comes to entertainment. After a very unsuccessful trip to Alton Towers, where she could do practically nothing, she came to our offices to try out Virtuality.

"We put the headset on her head, gave her the joystick and quickly explained how to play the game. As soon as the game started, her face lit up with delight. She was bouncing around in her wheelchair and afterwards she told us that the game had given her a sense of freedom and movement that she hadn't felt in a long time. It was wonderful to watch her moving around a world under her own steam, even if it was only inside a computer."

Virtuality - the games

Of the three games currently available, *Zone Hunter* is the most pleasing. You are a marine, sent into a violent city to stamp out an evil gang. As you move through the streets and buildings, robot guards appear from behind various pieces of scenery to stop you with a well-aimed bullet. Your marine is armed with a machine gun to start with, but power-ups can be picked up along the way by shooting special red boxes. Blue boxes contain speed-ups which make your marine move more quickly.

The game is played on a time system. You are given a certain amount of time to complete a section. If you don't finish your task in the allotted time, the game is over. If you do complete a section, you are awarded more time

and then moved onto the next section.

The world around you is so detailed, you almost want to go exploring rather than shoot at things. As you 'walk' down the streets of the city, a quick glance up will reveal the skyscrapers looming above you. At one point you have to go up in a lift after dropping into the sewer system. If you look up while you're rising to street level, the effect is amazing. The graphical speed of the whole system has been improved so much that Virtuality is very convincing, even to a hardened cynic like me.

The other three games are all just as impressive. *Virtual Boxing* is great fun, allowing you to beat the hell out of a friend without even touching him. To throw a punch, the player simply throws a punch in the real world and the joystick translates the movements for the game.

X-treme Strike immerses the player in an intergalactic war. Your mission is to defeat the enemy defences of the Empire worlds and to destroy the vital core reactor on the planet Zenon. The game is designed for the 2000SD sit-down unit and is simply stunning with amazing graphics. This is a game for *StarBlade* fans.

Each game is designed to promote repeat-playing, thus ensuring that the proprietor gets his income from the machines and you can become a happy Virtuality addict. The games get progressively harder and harder. You're either very lucky or a very good games player if you complete one of them on your first few tries. Only *Zone Hunter* has a time limit, while the rest of the

games end when you die. This means the games are limited only by your own skill.

The games make Virtuality into a truly unique system. The graphics speed and detail have been improved tremendously since the first generation of Virtuality games and I can heartily recommend that you have a go on one of these machines as soon as you can.

As for the future, your guess is as good as mine. With rapidly advancing technology, and increasing miniaturisation, the sky will definitely be the limit. Whether the sky will be real or virtual in nature remains to be seen.

PC POWER



Above: The Vocaliser alters players' voices.
Below: Squaring up in Virtuality Boxing.



"The graphical speed of the whole system has been improved so much that Virtuality is very convincing, even to a hardened cynic like me."

Interview with an angry young man no. 1

Dave Westley demobs from the PC Power office and heads for the war zone of Sensible Software, where the company's spokesman, Jon Hare, is going ballistic.

Sensible Software are the development team of the moment, in vogue now that *Cannon Fodder* has successfully exploded onto almost every conceivable format. It's a position Jon Hare takes full advantage of. Very much the Angry Young Man, Jon spits bile and the gaming world sits up and listens. Indeed he's the journalist's ideal – prod and poke him a bit and he'll tell you exactly

what he believes is wrong with the computer industry, and more importantly (well, interestingly), who he thinks is to blame. It's marvellous stuff – except for the fact that Jon's 'wising up'. He'll still sputter and kick up a fuss, but he seems to have lost his will to fight – "Because we're professional, and this is our living, we just don't put anything contentious in our games anymore – it's not worth our while."

It's a sad day. The computer industry, like every other art form, needs to be contentious and difficult occasionally – if only because being contentious means pushing back the boundaries of what's possible and predictable. "We've been trying to sell a particular game to people, but we can't get anyone to take it on. Everyone is missing out because game designers are not being allowed to produce certain types of product – and no, I don't mean anything pornographic.

"With the current restrictions we're unable to touch people emotionally, simply because we're denied the mechanisms that other art forms are allowed. A comedian gets onto a stage and won't be afraid to throw in a couple of swear words or to mention sex. Politicians are seen as a legitimate target in comedy, as are other public figures. Sex and love are understood by everyone, swear words are the strongest tools a language has to express degrees of anger, frustration or hurt. These things go to the core of human sensibilities. The problem is that there's also a strong correlation between moving one person and upsetting someone else. As long as people want things written for eight year olds, the present situation is okay, but as soon as you want to do intelligent, adult-oriented games – something

reflecting emotive issues – then we've really got to be allowed to send Mary Whitehouse to an early grave."

The bug bears in all of this seem to be the retailers. Unless a product conforms to their demands they simply won't stock it, an attitude which gives them an alarming amount of control over game content. According to Jon: "As developers we're effectively powerless – there's nothing you can do when you're continually presented with: 'well we love the game, but how are we going to get it to retail?' No publisher is going to take it on because no publisher is willing to take the risk. If Sensible had a couple of million in the bank then we'd go ahead and do it and sod them. Unfortunately we don't. So we need to find someone with the balls – or perhaps the stupidity – to have faith in us and our products, and stand up against market forces.

"Unfortunately, I don't think there's anyone around like that. There's no way that the 'great liberal thinkers' of our time are going to defend a game – simply because they have no evidence that what will be produced can be as artistic and profound as any piece of literature or film. Games are perceived as toys – not another artistic chapter – and we're in a Catch 22 situation because that perception can never be challenged until there's a challenging game, and there will never be a challenging game because there's no one willing to back a contentious product... You know, there are loads of good things to be done that haven't been – simply because they wouldn't sell in Smiths."

Whether we are missing out on the new art form of the 90's is fast going beyond the point of





I wonder if any of you readers have noticed the similarity between Jon Hare and Tony Slattery. Could they, by any chance, be related? I think we should be told.

proof – the Sensible team are gradually becoming sensible, world-weariness catching up with their beer-swilling, laugh-a-minute reputation: "The saddest thing in all of this is that it has become very tempting for us to give up and leave things out. After you've been working on something for a while, what's been interesting can become boring if someone else is restricting what you can do and say. It's too dispiriting... I mean, you can't shelter people from things – I've got no time for that. No one shelters me from Christians burbling dangerous inanities every Sunday, and if I have to tolerate them, they should tolerate me."

asked whether being 'bought' by a larger company would do the trick – provide the backing that Sensible needed. Jon replied: "Well, we've thought about that and the main thing is that then we'd be employed – which means a real loss of autonomy. We'd do it – but only at a price. After all, we've been self-employed for over 10 years now. We're very well established and people know and like our games. The offer would have to reflect that. I'll admit that there's a price for everything – but it depends upon how well they pay us, how many years we have to sacrifice, how much freedom we're left with... I mean, Ocean's deal with D.I.D was good, but it wasn't brilliant, and we wouldn't tie our hands for that amount of money. Freedom of movement is quite important and unless the person who is going to be looking after you is going to give you shit-loads of money, and you

trust them, you're always going to feel resentful.

"Selling an idea, per se, isn't the problem anyway – we're established now and because people know that we can make our ideas happen, we've given a lot of room for manoeuvre. The problem is selling a contentious idea. And the same problem would exist even if we had that kind of backing."

The adventure game Sensible are working on first grew in the minds of Chris and John over eight years ago. If it goes ahead it will be their first game specifically designed for the PC and a lot of things will have to change. The most notable thing will be the disappearance of the distinctive Sensible graphic. "Obviously we're going to have to change our look completely – you can't have matchstick men running around in a PC CD-ROM graphic adventure. We have 3D Studio and we're thinking of investing in Silicon Graphics, simply because it's so much faster and you can do more with the images, like morphing. We rendered 8 frames and it took 18 hours on the 3D Studio the other day (and night). It would be nice to have something that ran a little faster, but then £40,000 is a lot to invest. When you've got a game that isn't signed up, then you begin to think that what you're doing might be purely speculative. Conservatism inevitably creeps in and you wonder whether it might be best to stick with what you've got..."

"There's also a problem with realism that not many people seem to appreciate. When you play *Sensi Soccer*, because the players are tiny and obviously sprites, it looks as though they can do a lot – they can pass, shoot, etc. But when you get a huge, beautifully detailed creation you

immediately lose that feeling – even if they can do as much as the *Sensi* player. The more realistic something is, the more your subconscious automatically expects it to be able to act intelligently. And when you find it can't, disappointment inevitably follows."

"Once you go for bigger graphics then you're forced to go for a fantasy look – though even that's not a perfect way to get round the problem. The truth is that the more realistic games are getting, the more disappointing they've become – because we can't make them as intelligent as their 16.7, 24-bit colour images seem to require. Plus, there will always be the limitation of joystick and mouse control – I mean, let's face it, an interactive movie is always going to be near impossible."

**"No one
shelters me
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inanities, and if
I have to
tolerate them,
they should
tolerate me."**

If all of the things that John gets frustrated about, the limits of technology is the one that affects him the most. All developers wish for more powerful systems to develop on, but Jon feels the need for speed more acutely than most. There's a sense of urgency as he calls for standardisation – as if, in some way, time is running out...

It really irritates people when they spend money on a CD-ROM product only to find that it's exactly the same as the floppy version. The 600Mb plus storage space seems to demand that developers find ways of using it, yet Jon Hare thinks that's the wrong way to look at it...

"At the moment the expectation thing of enhancements from one platform to another just irritates the hell out of me. We try to make the things that we do good anyway and if the game is good in its existing form why expect more? You don't expect more from a hardback version of a book than a paperback one."

"CD-ROM is just another storage medium - people have got to understand that. No one spoke to developers about it when it was being developed, did they? No one talked to us about what we want to do - about what is financially viable. If you take the original *Sensible Soccer* - we'll do something for that for CD-ROM, but we're not going to change the game itself. We'll just add an extra 'thing.' We'll leave the game itself alone. It's far more profitable for us to write an original football game for CD-ROM which uses the capability properly rather than tag on unnecessary bits and pieces, which takes time and doesn't really enhance the gameplay."

"If we're going to do CD-ROM games, we're going to do CD-ROM games, we're not going to convert from floppy. We're doing a CD-ROM game at the moment and we're going to build the game around the hardware. The CD-ROM is basically a bigger hard disk with slower access times - and our game will take that into account, use its capabilities to the full."

"This is why I keep going on about single formats - a good game is best on its original format. It's been designed to maximise the hardware. I think people sometimes miss the point. When you're making the game, the thing you have to bear in mind more than anything else is, 'what is the machine you're working on capable of doing?' These are the parameters around which you write and people should understand that - the games are tuned for that particular machine."

"People say 'why isn't it enhanced for this machine?' and the simple reason is that we've spent an awfully long time getting it right for the original one - and the most we can do is add a graphics scene without destroying the gameplay. If you've done it well in the first place it shouldn't need changing."

"But then, the reason people expect more is that they are aware that for publishers it's just a way of getting extra money - the music industry effectively doubled their profits with CDs - and people want to make sure that they're not being ripped off..."

"I do feel sorry for those people who buy both versions of a game, but I don't feel sorry for the CD-ROM owner. He or she shouldn't expect more - why should we bother to change something for a second format if it was already good on the first?"

"But doesn't it go back to what you were saying about a game being in tune with the hardware it's being programmed for? The most outstanding thing about a CD is the storage space - and so a game being ported over should reflect that."

"That's true again - but then we don't believe in porting things over, full stop. We'll do certain conversions for the CD-ROM owner, but what we really want to do are CD-specific titles. And we're not the only ones."

"CD-ROM is really hard for us, though. You're going to see a lot less original products on that format from independents like us, simply because we're too small - it costs a fortune. When the hardware improves, CD-ROM will come into its own. There'll be less work to do and it will become more cost-effective - simply because the machines will do the work for you."

CD hell

► "CDs are not what people were expecting and certainly the punters aren't really aware of their limitations. At the moment you've got to employ tons of graphic artists to pretend to be a RISC chip, which, for a development company like ours, means we've got to double in size. I'm not just talking about fast-paced games where obviously millions of rendered frames need to be processed in seconds. Even in graphic adventures, if you want to do anything exciting, i.e. animate, then you've got the same problem. The fact is largely ignored, outside of development, that you have to devote so much more effort to managing these bloated teams. Also, at the same time, this makes it so much

"The nightmare will end with the end of the technological race, which has to come with TV quality images - and that can't be far away."

more difficult to retain your creativity..."

The hardware of the future seems to be the answer to these problems - at least for Jon. "To be absolutely honest I'd like to bypass these shitty machines altogether. Sony's Playstation is looking brilliant - when you see it up and running you begin to wonder why anyone else is even bothering. CDI, 3DO, CD32 are all lessons that CD technology won't work unless you have enormous hardware muscle - Argonaut's BRRender will hopefully be able to provide that for the PC.

But that, of course, leads us onto another problem, particularly apt for the PC - standardisation - or the lack of it.

Every time we say OK, we'll have another format, then the user base fragments. That's happened so many times now that developing a major title has become almost impossible. We're reaching less people because of the increasing number of formats, and people have started judging us not on a game that we've done, but on a conversion that someone else has... It pisses me off that these companies don't work together to centralise and create a better market - not only for us but for the whole of the industry. We could have that ultimate machine, beyond the Playstation. You know, I'd like to pour all of my creative energy into a really good concept and really work on it, but it's not worth it. Everything is too diversified. We're doing *Sensible World Of Soccer* but already we're thinking that we'll only make the screen 200 high because otherwise we'll have to do it again for the ST - and you're constantly downgrading now because of conversions that you'll have to do in the future."

Jon does see the light at the end of the tunnel, though - with the end of advancement: "The nightmare will hopefully end with the end of the technological race, which has to come with TV quality images - and that can't be too far away. It's going to be a god-send for us when it does happen, because our strength is in design - we've never been able to keep up with technology."

I asked about Virtual Reality - surely that is the next step up from TV quality images? Jon

disagreed: "Things like Virtual Reality are not steps forward, but different steps. Most people are going to be happy with TV quality images with all of the data, sound, etc. coming in as fast as you want. Then it will be down to the peripherals - like gloves, like VR headsets... From a programming point of view, nothing will change that much - converting a game from joystick control to mouse control isn't that hard. The graphics handling is the bulk of the work - converting a game from a 256 colour to a 156 one, for example, can be a nightmare."

Hmm. As John said himself, images are effectively useless without substance to back them up. The 256, hi-res games of today only seem to bring disappointment in their wake, as players realise that the glorious images before them are as dumb as the space invader sprite that spat at them over 10 years ago. Surely the truth of the matter is that advancement won't end until you have computerised characters as intelligent, emotional, interesting and idiosyncratic as human beings.

"Maybe... I suppose I'm just Utopian, really - perhaps I'll be waiting forever. I just know that I'd like to work within an environment where there was a standard - where I could have the role of a film maker/writer. I'd like Sensible Software to be a sort of Woody Allen company - that's where I would feel most comfortable. At the moment there's just too much emphasis on technology for that. I suppose it's just a question of hanging around until it all ends - if it ever ends."

I asked how long Sensible would keep battling away? Jon sighed: "I don't know... We've got a couple of good games in us yet. Perhaps we could hibernate and wake up when all this is over - now that really would be good."

10 CD-ROMS

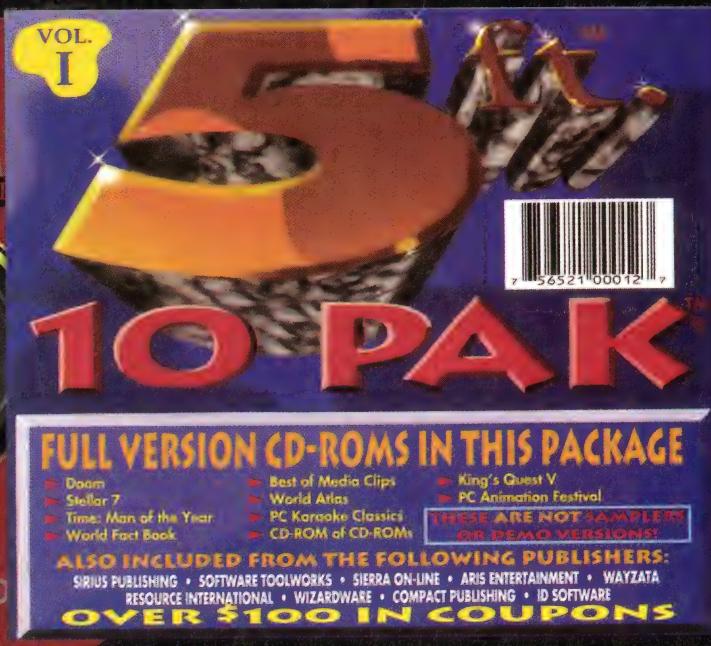
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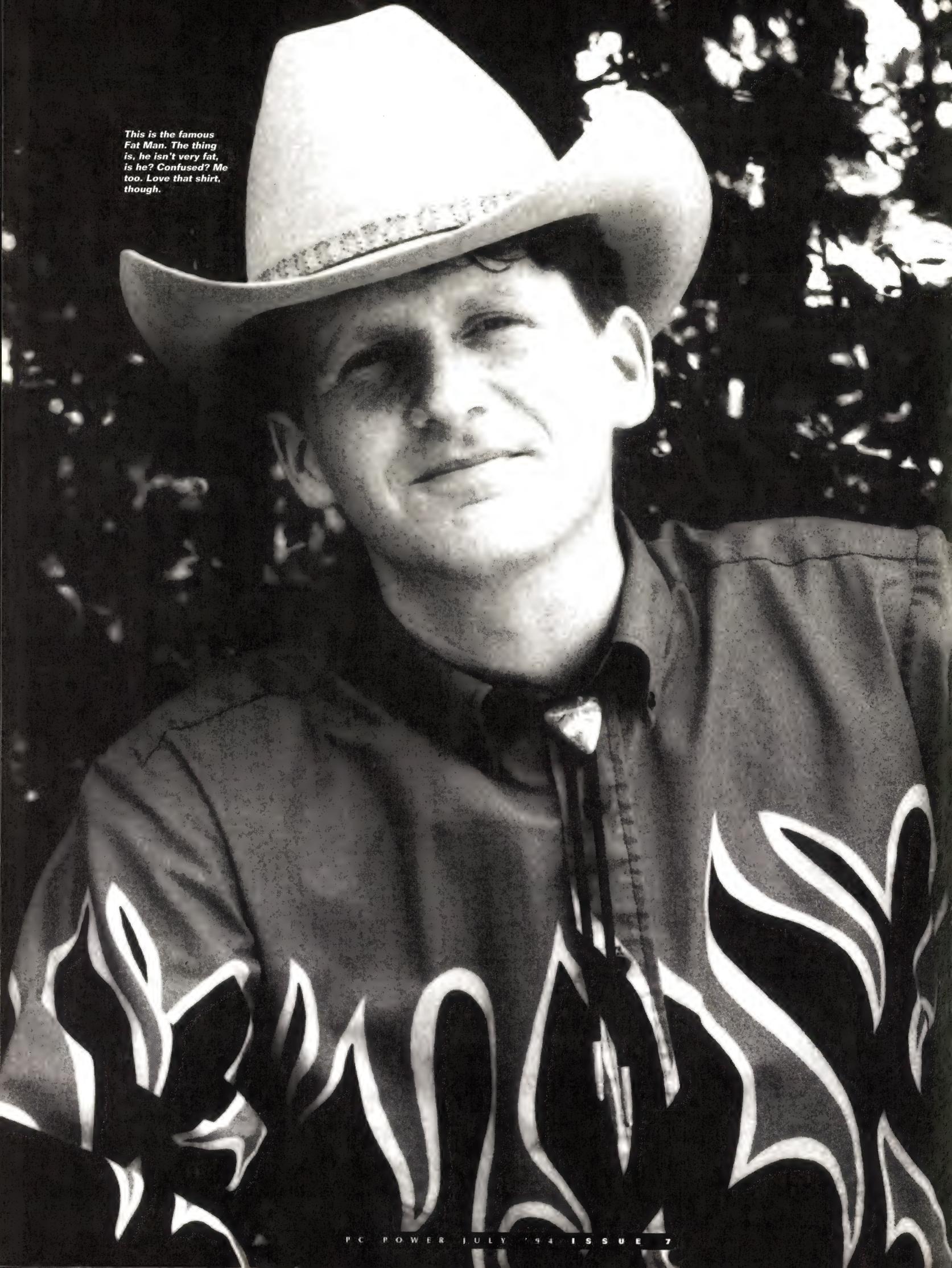
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*This is the famous
Fat Man. The thing
is, he isn't very fat,
is he? Confused? Me
too. Love that shirt,
though.*

You Fat Bastard!

Jon Ewing gets off his horse and drinks his full cream milk in a tribute to the computer game cowboy and music maestro – George Alistair Sanger – The Fat Man.

Jt is April and George Alistair Sanger is visiting a computer games conference in London where he has been asked to talk about 'Music & Emotion: The Heart Of Interaction'. Unfortunately, he does not understand what that means, so he elects to show a few cool home movies instead. Following his all-too-brief appearance before the bemused audience, he is approached by two young men with flushed faces. "Er, hello," says one, nervously. "You don't know us, but well, I guess you know our work... we did the Amiga conversion for the *Wing Commander* music."

The mixture of awe and twitchy embarrassment on their faces is delicious. "Hey! You sent us a tape!" says their tall, sequin-suited idol. He tells them that his colleague and musical team mate Dave Govett really enjoyed their version of the George Sanger original. "He said it really JAMMED. I think that means he liked it..."

You may never have heard of him, but to some people this man is a genius and a superstar. He calls himself The Fat Man, although he is more than six feet tall and probably weighs close to eleven stone. Not so long ago he was just another guitar-toting surf punk – and maybe he still is – but to these two pilgrims he is an avatar, the essence of deity in human form. The reason is simple: The Fat Man is the Cecil B. de Mille of interactive music – he works with the biggest budgets and he writes with the broadest horizons. He is, almost literally, larger than life and every inch oozes enthusiasm. "I love it," he says later. "I'm happy enough that we're just able to make a living out of this, but everyone wants to talk to me right now. I've said it before – I'm like the pretty girl at the prom."

George Sanger cannot play piano or keyboards, and he has precious little experience of computer programming. This makes him rather unusual in a section of the industry dominated by 'musicians' who learned their trade by programming bleeps and rasps on the Commodore 64. The Fat Man is a guitarist with a degree in music from California's Occidental College, who spent his early career working variously as a sound engineer, cartoonist, T-shirt salesman and rock musician. Yet in a little over a decade, he and his partners in Team Fat have earned themselves a reputation as the industry's foremost games musicians. Perhaps the reason for the team's continued success is Sanger's purist musical philosophy.

"Our success is based on music and people," he states simply in his address to the conference-goers. "What I'm talking about is fundamental art theory. Technological trends, showbiz trends and software trends like the so-called popularisation of multimedia – they're overrated. They're just ripples. The best that technology can offer the

artist is to remove barriers to artistic creativity. In every case, well-composed, appropriate music will always achieve our goals."

While the in-house musicians of giant software houses toil endlessly in their sterile offices, The Fat Man works from home, in his own stylised recording studio, an untidy mixture of computers and guitars. He does not seem to kiss ass to the big developers. If anything, they seem to bow to him. His career began with a typically perverse false start: In 1983 he stumbled into his first soundtrack job after moving from Los Angeles to Austin, Texas. The game was called *Thin Ice* and George Sanger's contribution was a ten second loop entitled 'Carnival Of The Penguins'. Not surprisingly it sounds highly primitive today (and probably seemed equally drab at the time) but it earned him a cool \$1,000. Unfortunately, being reluctant to pursue this new career, he invested the money in a couple of disastrous business ventures before desperation forced him to put his computing talents on sale again at the price of \$49.95 for a one-minute George Sanger classic.

Exactly when and why he became The Fat

games producers at Lucasfilms in 1989, who were then working on a new adventure game called *Loom*. They invited The Fat Man to write a soundtrack based on eight movements of Tchaikovsky's 'Swan Lake'. Although this could hardly be described as original work, Sanger believes that it was the first time a games musician had made an effort to compose variations on a classical theme: "I don't think anyone had ever before sat down and listened to tapes and studied the pieces instead of just entering the notes into the computer like a little word processor."

Meanwhile, Richard Garriott of Austin-based games developers Origin Systems was regularly receiving mysterious notes which read simply: "I have what you need. Call me," cryptically signed by 'The Fat Man'. Unable to resist the temptation, Garriott did call, and the result, in 1990, was *Wing Commander*. The musical accompaniment to *Wing Commander* can genuinely be credited for the game's massive success. It is a simple equation to prove: as good as the graphics are, if you turn off the sound the game loses the real heart of its entertainment. It loses its feeling of interactivity.

"The music got a lot of attention because it was integrated. We had it all written down so that it wouldn't integrate at first, but then we said: 'Hey, can we chop the music up into little bits and have them cue off the tense moments in the game scenario?'"

He not only proved that it could be done, but that it was a vital step in the development of interactive computer gaming. Picture the scene without music: you are a space pilot in a single-seater fighter craft, surrounded by a claustrophobic box of tissue-thin alloy with just a small window showing the empty blackness of outer space. Your only indication of enemy activity is a radar scanner. A dot appears on the screen, moving gradually towards you, but you don't notice it. There is nothing but silence. The dot is a missile. When it hits your ship, you die instantly. No drama, no climax, only death.

But in *Wing Commander* there is a crucial difference. As you move through space, you are accompanied by a dramatic yet stable ambient soundtrack. It keeps you alert, but comfortable with the strength and capabilities of your craft. However, when that ominous blip appears on the radar, the music changes. A faster rhythm, a more urgent key. As a weapon is launched against you, you hear a piece of music which The Fat Man calls 'The Missile Is Chasing You'. Quickly you take action. A loop and a barrel roll deftly repositions your Scimitar Class fighter and the Kilrathi dog is in your sights. The music changes again. But this time The Fat Man calls it 'You Are Chasing The Missile'. The whole feeling

The Fat Man is the Cecil B. de Mille of Interactive Music – he works with the biggest of budgets, and the broadest of horizons."

Man does not really matter. The pseudonym works like a charm, and Sanger lives the dream to perfection with his cowboy hats and over-the-top country and western suits designed by Nudie of North Hollywood. It gives him a personality – an attribute sadly lacking in the software industry where developers are faceless, silent dweebs and their products are the stars. The Fat Man aims to change all that, sprinkling a little colour into a grey world. "When I was in bands," he says, "we were always trying to figure out how to be the next Beatles. But the Beatles today wouldn't be dealing with records. They'd be in any medium where the kids had an inexplicable affinity for it and the parents couldn't understand it – like video games... I'm looking for someone to do something miraculous with the medium. We haven't seen it yet. In our medium the stars have been Sonic and Mario, and I'd like to think one day Team Fat might be one of the new stars."

Although 'Carnival Of The Penguins' was not exactly a landmark in The Fat Man's career, it did forge one crucial contact in the business. Agent Dave Warhol, who paid The Fat Man that first \$1,000 in the business, introduced him to the



Do of the game has been transformed from a panicked retreat to a triumphant offensive. All with a few carefully chosen musical notes.

It is a manipulative, cinematic trick to make you feel like you are part of the action. "The music should enhance the emotional direction of the game," he says. "We want to make you sweat like crazy when it's time to be afraid and make you elated when things go well." Of course, recognising the proper emotional temperature of the game is hard enough, writing music to accompany it is harder still. The Fat Man seeks his inspiration in the shower: "I watch the music in my mind," he says, perversely. "That's why I come out half clean."

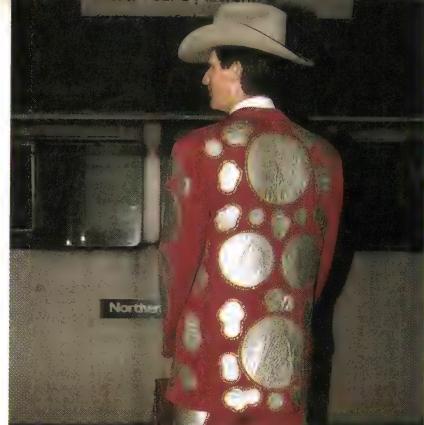
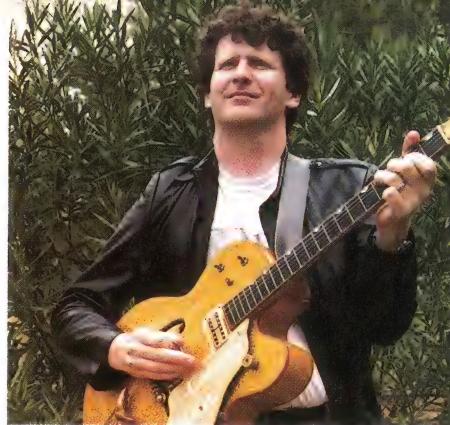
Team Fat have performed live playing surf music at the massive CES electronics conference in Las Vegas, and the home movies prove that "they can kick it if they have to," says Fat. He still has a passion for guitars, recently adding a classic gold Gretsch White Falcon to his collection. So it may well come as a surprise to many that this musical "purist" does not use a musical instrument of any kind to perform music for games. In fact, every note is step-entered into a sequencer using only a mouse. But don't knock it – it works. "I can't play keyboard at all," he admits. "It gives me some disadvantages, but they're insignificant. Real keyboard players have little set pieces that they do – if they can't think of something, they noodle. I can't do that. My music has to come from my heart."

Since *Wing Commander* there have been dozens more soundtracks – many for the PC. The Fat Man strives to improve on his techniques all the time, with the recent *SSN-21 Seawolf* submarine sim, for example: "The exciting thing about the sound in *SSN-21* is that the more you listen to it, the better you play the game. It ties into the wonderful system that designer John Ratcliff created. It means you can travel through a 3-D sound landscape."

The Fat Man has displayed a natural flair for working with the best of programmers, rarely working on an insignificant game. Team Fat are credited for *Wing Commander 2*, *Ultima Underworld*, *Star Trek 25th Anniversary*, *Indy Car Racing*, *Mario Teaches Typing* and perhaps most famously of all, *The 7th Guest*. The latter was of course arguably the most publicised PC game of all time, and The Fat Man was not slow to exploit his contribution. "The hottest thing in multimedia is games; the hottest thing in games is *The 7th Guest*," he claimed recently. "There are those that say – I'm not going to say it myself – that the hottest thing in *The 7th Guest* is the music."



The Fat Team include (from left to right): K. Weston Phelan; The Fat Man; Joe McDermott and the one and only Dave Govett. They're not fat at all, are they? It's a rock and roll swindle.



Above: The Fat Man dons a silly suit and heads towards the underground.

Above Left: The Fat Man's cousin Ernie waxes lyrical for the camera. He's singing 'I'm a lonely hobo with only a bottle of whisky and a horse for comfort' – or something.

Left: K. Weston Phelan (what's his first name?) at the Fat Labs Testing Facility. He's not a member of the Fat family, but, like the rest of the 'Not Really That Fat' company, he does enjoy a jolly good singalong.



Theoretically, that puts me at the top of a very large, crooked pyramid."

The CD of *The 7th Guest* features about half an hour of "red book" audio – music which can be played direct from the disc by any CD player. Moreover, the game manual features extensive liner notes explaining the making of this interactive "concept album". It is a timely recognition of the part played by music and audio in modern game development, and a particularly important tribute to Team Fat, a unique studio band. As the man himself admits, the music does not have to stand alone. "Without the game it would be difficult to rationalise the existence of that 30 minute album," says George, unpretentiously. "The music works best with the game – the complete experience is the multimedia experience."

Much has been written already about the glories and shortcomings of Trilobyte's puzzle game *The 7th Guest*, but its clever use of music to alter mood and pace has been universally lauded. For The Fat Man it was a completely successful game. He pricks our emotions as effectively as any of the spooky graphics, sometimes with typically twisted results. "Music without humour is just notes," he says, dryly. "If someone's expecting horror music, don't give 'em what they're expecting. Why not give them a Hawaiian luau? Music is very high on emotion, but it's very unspecific. Hawaiian music is one thing, but if you put it in a haunted house it becomes something completely different. If you take the 'Blue Danube' and play it over a spaceship spinning through space, then you create something that's really surprising."

Team Fat earned a five-figure sum for *The 7th Guest* along with a 2% royalty of the wholesale selling price, and grossed \$250,000 in 1993. The sequel to *The 7th Guest – The 11th Hour* – should do no harm to their bank balance. The Fat Man is still a long way from the "cigar-chewing, feet on the desk, fire everyone executive" millionaire suggested by his name, but he is certainly becoming a very big player in the industry. The latest move in this plan for world domination is The Fat Seal.

Dissatisfied with the performance of dozens of PC sound cards on the market, which fail to do justice to his musical ideas, The Fat Man has now begun a campaign to forge an industry standard in General MIDI compatibility. "Several musical attributes, such as relative instrument volumes,

are beyond the scope of current General MIDI specification. That means that a triangle might be deafeningly loud and an orchestra hit might be inaudible. Instruments can even be out of tune with each other and still qualify as General MIDI. With our additional testing, musicality is no longer a shot in the dark."

Most in-game music is stored as MIDI files, because they are so compact. MIDI (Musical Instrument Digital Interface) is an internationally agreed standard of electronic hardware (along with a language of commands) which allows a piece of music to be stored in the program data and replayed remotely through a compatible sound card. The music itself is not stored, but only the instructions necessary to carry out the performance, so MIDI files are tiny compared to CD music files.

The General MIDI system uses a pre-defined keymap of 47 drum sounds, 128 other (musical) sounds and set parameters for output levels, pitch bend and so on. Unfortunately, not all General MIDI-compatible cards reproduce sounds identically. To combat this problem, Team Fat have designed a unique series of 'patches', the configurations of parameters needed to make a particular sound on a particular card. With these patches, which are being made available to developers for only \$1, Team Fat hope to set an industry standard.

With luck, the thousands of hours of work going on at the Fat Manor labs might bring us a bit closer to the golden day when we can load a game into a PC and start to play right away, no matter what combination of different manufacturers' hardware we might be using.

George Sanger's highly ambitious dreams are balanced by his refreshing and philosophical understanding of the multimedia industry. The Fat Man enjoys the prestige of his 'fame', but realises that every game is a brief glory. "The way things go," he says, "we're building sand castles. You've just got to build your sand castle and enjoy the fact that it's there and then watch the waves come over it..."

He is bigger than life, bigger than the biggest blockbuster game, but at the heart of his crusade is a simple love of music. As if to remind us of this, The Fat Man quotes three criteria that any in-game music should fulfill. Firstly, does every bit of the audio support the emotional direction of the game? Secondly, does the music maximise the player's interest? And thirdly, and by far the most important question, "Can you dance to it?"

Ged Start: Stuff and Nonsense

Opinion



My favourite headline of the last 12 months was the Sun's (surprise, surprise) all time classic: "Mad Hacker in Magazine Bomb Lesson". The story went on to describe how a computer magazine had included instructions on how to manufacture a booby trap explosive device on the CD-ROM cover disc. I have to confess that I was editor of the publication in question (not PC Power, I hasten to add) at the time. It caused a fair amount of consternation for all involved and the magazine was withdrawn from sale. However, the tabloid journalists, whilst scaring many potential readers of computer magazines, blew the incident out of all proportion. The brief text file containing the offending information had slipped through the checking procedures. It was very well hidden deep in a subdirectory of a subdirectory, a mistake that can never be repeated. All publishers have reviewed their methods to make sure of this. However, for the tabloid hacks it was a heaven-sent opportunity to tell the unsuspecting public once more about the evils of computers. The fact of the matter is that information of this type is widely available and is frequently distributed by accident through bulletin boards and the like. (It is also available in countless books – remember books?) How many people actually read all the text files that come with a shareware or public domain program?

Added to scares of this nature are the numerous reports of computer pornography, not only in the tabloids but also on radio and television documentaries. A large amount of the so-called facts being presented are misleading and are being distorted in the cause of sensationalism. I have read numerous reports that suggest that young children can use their computers to log on to bulletin boards in Europe, to gain access to hard porn and download the images, which they then sell on to their friends in school. But hang on a minute – this just doesn't ring true. How many teenagers do you know that have unsupervised access to a PC fitted with a modem? How many parents do you know that would fail to notice the sudden increase in phone bills as a result of overseas telephone calls? These porn-flogging juveniles must come from exceptionally wealthy families where the parents have no interest in their offsprings' well-being.

Next come the reports that illicit material is being distributed right under the noses of teachers and parents because "...no-one can tell what a disk (or CD) contains just by looking at it." True enough, but why is this only being applied to computer disks and not to other media. How does a parent know whether their child has just brought home a copy of 'Bambi' or a copy of 'Bambi Goes Crazy Ape Bonkers With His Drill and Sex'. The same applies just as much to books, the content is not always reflected by the cover. There is only one solution for concerned teachers and parents and that is to see for themselves – be it book, video, magazine, floppy disk or CD-ROM. "Oh no!" the tabloids cry, "the kids are getting away with distributing this foul and depraved material because the parents don't understand the technology". Well, whose fault is that? In the sexually repressed society in which we live, adolescent curiosity in sex is as common as zits. Every teenage boy has at some stage managed to get their hands on a copy of Mayfair or Parade or a disk containing scanned images of naked women. They might hide the magazines under their mattress or try to disguise the floppy by labelling it as something else, but if a parent doesn't know where the stuff has been hidden it is hardly the fault of the mattress – or the computer.

Then there are the CD-ROMs. Because they can contain not only still images but also short video clips, these are an even bigger threat – not. One of the broadsheet papers carried a story about the potential risks of children copying computer CDs. This is about as likely as a teenager with free access to overseas telephone calls. A CD can contain up to 650Mb, so just how is this going to be copied? On to a hard disk? Not very likely. Other than power business machines, most domestic PC hard disks are well below 200Mb, even allowing for disk doubling software. The article I saw also suggested that children would be able to make their own pirate CDs for recirculation. What? Just who are these journalists who think they can get away with writing such crap? Have they any idea how much a CD writer costs – let alone the cost of writable CDs? Now there may be criminal elements in this world that would not balk at setting up such an operation, but to suggest that children are going to be behind this is just plain ludicrous.

In the end I am just plain sick of the misinformation being circulated. There is hope on the horizon. The Beeb's new computer show The Net has a fair amount of promise (though they still seem to think that people who use computers for business and people who use them for leisure are two separate groups, not one and the same) but who knows? Maybe at long last the mainstream press will start getting their facts straight – now there's a refreshing idea.

"How does a parent know whether their child has brought home a copy of 'Bambi' or a copy of 'Bambi Goes Crazy Ape Bonkers With His Drill And Sex'?"

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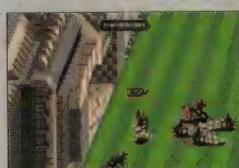
REVIEW INDEX



We've had a veritable bloodfest in the PC Power offices this month. In our fact and fantasy-packed review pages we bring you the latest in every conceivable area of PC gaming combat: - from the sword-swinging arcade action of *The Horde*, to the alien-blasting *Spaceship Warlock*; from the unsportman-like conduct in *Brutal Football*, to the tactical air-to-air combat in this issue's Game of the Month, *Pacific Strike*. Yep, this month it's been war, and what fun it's been!

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The big choke

It all started so innocently. Chauncey, a serving boy, saves the King from choking on chicken, and becomes a Knight!



Apparently, Chauncey was brought up by a herd of cows.



The High Chancellor, on the other hand, came from the gentry.



Could the chicken-choking King be about to reverse their fortunes?

The Horde

The most interesting and unusual game for many months, comes to town courtesy of Crystal Dynamics and US Gold. Lover of all things big, red and bizarre, Dave Westley hordes it all to himself (er, sorry).

The Horde is widely recognised as one of the better games to have come out on the 3DO. A mad strategy-cum-arcade game set in quasi-Medieval times (its inhabitants own televisions and telephones), *The Horde* is a sort of *Populous* with bells on. You have a village and you must protect it from the Horde ("hulking, galloping mobs of loud, red ravenous eaters") by setting all sorts of traps for them. You also have to run around with the Grimthwacker (big fat sword) chopping them all into little pieces before they get to your villagers, cows and/or crops. You'll also find a little bit of *Sim City* in the game. Every year you'll be taxed and so you have to make sure that at the end of the final quarter you have enough money to pay. This means you have to have planted enough trees to cut down (to get timber money from),

have saved enough villagers (to get money for crops) and made sure that your cows haven't been eaten. It's a tall order because those pesky little Hordes are ravenous beasties, and bloody determined to completely ruin your year.

As a CD-ROM product, it comes as no surprise to find that *The Horde* has over 35 minutes of video footage. What is a surprise is the quality of it. The actors involved can actually act, and the tongue-in-cheek dialogue is genuinely amusing. The game opens up with Chauncey, the hero, serving the King's table. The scoffers are all listening to The High Chancellor (the villain of the piece) who is telling a jolly story. In the revelry that follows the King chokes on a piece of chicken. No one notices except for The High Chancellor, who sees his chance to seize the throne, and Chauncey, who jumps to the King's aid and saves him with quick-thinking and the Heimlich manoeuvre.

Against all odds
The King is naturally grateful and in a flourish of generosity offers Chauncey anything he desires. The answer of "a few bushels of gold" is turned down with the protestation. "No... You are far too modest. This is not a sufficient reward for the bravest Knight in our realm - the mightiest Warrior in our kingdom! We will grant thee a much more suitable gift... hmm... hmm... ah-ha! I have it! We shall give thee the title Lord and apportion to thee vast tracts of land! Long Live



Lord Chauncey! Hurrah! Hurrah."

As you've probably guessed the gift proved to be a mixed blessing. Against all odds, Chauncey has to develop a grubby small plot of land into a thriving community. He has to allow the land to grow and prosper, in spite of the Horde, and the Lord High Chancellor.

The means to victory are twofold. There's the strategy element in the development of your village, and there's the arcade action of running around and bashing the Horde. The two take regular turns. The Horde come at the end of every crop - four times in one year - to eat everything that you have spent time cultivating. It gets very infuriating and the two minutes real time apportioned for each season is never enough for everything that you want to do. The result is constant pressure - during development to get everything done; and during battle to find and kill all of the Horde before they've eaten you out of house, home and body. If you've never felt what real stress is, I suggest you buy this game -



The Hordes

The Horde come in a number of (ugly, smelly and frightening) shapes and sizes, ranging from the weedy 'Adolescent Hordlings' to the almighty 'Juggernaut Hordlings'. The following is a brief description of each, telling you exactly how scared you should be on sight of one of these.



(1) Adolescent Hordlings (*hordlingus adolescus eatemupium*)
These are your average Hordlings, cannon fodder thrown at you at the start of the game. They're stupid, not particularly fast and explode with just one swipe of the Grimthwacker. They have the advantage of their abundant numbers and that voracious appetite that drives them to walk over spikes to get a nice, fat, juicy cow.



(2) Piranah Hordlings (*hordlingium caninus biteum*)
The next step on the evolutionary scale are the Piranah Hordlings. These little things are a lot faster and an awful lot more intelligent - they will simply side-step your spiky traps. Their weakness is their tendency to burst - one thwack is all that it takes.



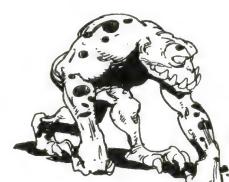
(3) Forest Hordlings (*hordlingium pygmus aggravatum*)
These are a cross between "irritating pygmies with blowguns, and highly irritating giggling leprechauns". They pop out from the sides of trees ("with a funny waddle") and shoot Chauncey with a plunger-like blowgun before swallowing a cow whole.



(4) Shamen Hordlings (*hordlingium magicus irritatem*)
The Shamen Hordlings are almost impossible to catch. With their teleport facility they can jump about all over the village, tiring you out trying to chase them. They can also hurl fireballs and reconstitute Hordlings from the dead. Basically they're a living nightmare.



(5) Desert Hordlings (*biggus diggus*)
These spiky things have the disturbing ability to burrow beneath the sand and so escape detection until they're right beneath an object of desire (usually your prize cow). They're also very strong with donkey-like hind legs, perfect for kicking Chaunceys.



(6) Juggernaut Hordlings (*reddus giganicus extradummus*)
Your worst nightmare. These Hordlings are huge, incredibly strong and resistant to the Grimthwacker. You'll need to get a fair few hits in before these blobs of red explode. Worse, if they manage to hit you, you'll go flying. If they manage to hit you twice, you're dead.

it'll be an education.

During the development phases you can plan for the Horde's attack. At the start of the game you can dig spiked pits, put fences around your most valued items and alter the terrain by increasing the amount of water (the first groups of the Horde can't swim and will drown). At the end of every year you'll also be able to buy certain items - contract knights that will bash everything that comes near them, stone walls, a teleportation ring and so on. These objects are necessary because the Horde have a learning curve as strong as your own and initial defences will soon crumble. For example, they'll attack from a different direction to avoid water, walls or spiked pits and they'll try and keep their distance from your Grimthwacker.

In addition to their increasing cunning, as your plot of land grows, so the Hordlings that are attracted to it become more powerful. (See box above.) You'll start with the *hordlingus adolescus eatemupium* (short, ugly and stupid) before

developing onto the likes of *hordlingium magicus irritatem* (short, ugly, intelligent magic users) and *reddus giganicus extradummus* (extremely ugly but impossibly strong and stupid). The latter are able to walk over spiked pits, the former teleport themselves anywhere.

The taxman cometh

Unfortunately, you can't spend all of your money on defences. If you really hope to succeed you'll need to invest in saplings, etc. to provide a regular source of income. The Lord High Chancellor also comes once a year to take your taxes and if you don't pay it's off to prison you go. Worse, he puts them up every year so you'll need to attract more and more villagers, buy more and more cows to keep paying them. This, of course, means that you've got a much wider area to cover and so the Hordlings will be able to inflict more and more damage before you can find and kill them all.

Keeping the game together are those Full

Motion Video sections we've mentioned. You'll get TV reports when anything major happens (like the tax men being kidnapped, a meteor about to crash into the earth, floods, etc.) and at the end of a number of seasons the Chancellor will summon you to the Palace: "The King has taken interest in your grubby piece of land - he requests your presence now!" It's these sections that provide the storyline to the game, and where you'll find out how truly psychotic the Chancellor is (you'll see him stabbing a Voodoo doll of you!) You'll also begin to wonder who the Chancellor is in league with - could he be working with the Horde to take over the crown?

When you're presented to the King it's usually because he wants to give you something as you're doing so well. On your way through this game the King will give you land in five areas: The Shimto Planes, The Fetid Swamps Of Buuzal, The Tree Realms Of Alburga, Kar-Nyar and The Frozen Wastes Of Vesh. These differ in the kind of villagers ("Chauncey has ten unique kinds of



All the PC's a stage

The stars in *The Horde* might not have the presence of Sir John Gielgud, nor the star status of Schwarzenegger, but they're pretty good, despite that. Kirt Cameron (star of *Sky's Growing Pains*) takes the leading role of Chauncey, and Michael Gregory (Total Recall, ROBOCOP and *The Lawnmower Man*) takes the role of the The Evil Lord High Chancellor. Overall responsibility for the live action sequences was given to two-time Emmy Award winners, McKenzie, Waggaman and Weaver. They've done a superb job.



Above: A 3-D Studio Horde who has just eaten a human.



► villagers to protect and serve, each hailing from a different country in the kingdom, and each group a bit odder than the last."); their weather and terrain (in the tree realms of Alburga you have to be very careful with your flamethrower – hit a tree and a whole section of the tinder-like forest will go up in flames); and economies (try getting villagers to stay and work in the desert!). Different, region-specific tactics and strategies will be required for each of these areas. In the Tree Realm, for example, you're not able to cut down trees to make money. Each of these ancient hunks of wood has a spirit guardian and their destruction knocks one life point off your own.

Cow Horde

The graphics in *The Horde* are always clear and beautifully put together. The fact that the 45 degree perspective only ever provides a view of a limited number of things, and that most of the area is made up of grass, means that the game was never going to be stunning. Look closely, however, and you'll see some of the best animation yet – on the villagers, the cows

Tax time. Fail and it's game over, and gaol time.



(especially the cows!) and the Horde. The latter bounce, jump and run with a fluidity and ease that only the Avatar (with over 2000 frames of animation) in *Ultima VIII* could match. The Full Motion Video sections are also unparalleled – not only in the acting, but in the production values. There is no stop/start as the CD is accessed for more information, just gloriously funny, brilliantly animated, uninterrupted video.

The different strategies required, and the speed of the game (two minutes to plan isn't a long time) manage to keep this game fun for far longer than its simplicity should allow. True, the terrain changes from one scenario to another, and there are some random elements (like flooding, an increase in the Hordes, etc.) but what you do remains fairly constant throughout. The pacing of the game is the saving grace. Whilst you're caught up bashing the Hordes you accept the game as an extremely fun, yet simplistic arcade simmy thing. Step back, however, and you realise that, for all of the surface gloss, this game is a very shallow entity indeed.

This isn't necessarily a bad thing. The game is hugely original, incredibly addictive, and very, very rewarding and I guarantee that even the simmiest person out there will enjoy it. It has, however, really been designed for those who want an immediate buzz. It was originally designed for a console machine, after all. Anyone who looks for immediate gratification from their games is likely to take *The Horde* immediately to their hearts. Whatever, everyone should try this game out. Bashing has never, ever been made so quirky, nor so fun.

● DAVE WESTLEY

FULL POWER

The Horde

Publisher: US Gold

Contact: 021-625-3388

Developer: Crystal Dynamics

Price: £44.99

REQUIREMENTS

386; 33MHz (486SX 25 recommended);
4Mb RAM; CD-ROM drive;
DOS 3.1 or above.
Supports: Sound Blaster; Gravis
Ultrasound only.

PUBLISHER'S SAY

It's wild and wacky, sizzling and silly, hectic and hilarious. We love it. You will too. You won't be able to get enough of the Full Motion Video, the slashing arcade-action or the cows! Hordlings rule, OK!

PC POWER'S SAY

Well perhaps I wouldn't go that far... This is still a top-notch game, though, bursting with the creative juices of Crystal Dynamics. If you want a lot of fun, but don't want to think too hard, get yourself a copy of this. It's top.

BREAKDOWN

Graphics

+ Excellent Full Motion Video: superb in-game animation.

Sound

+ The burps, screams and yells of the Horde are superb. No stop-starts as digitized speech is read from the CD.

Playability

+ A fast paced romp that's extremely fun to play. The 'sim' elements will also entice the more cerebral players to give it a go.

SUMMARY

An extremely quirky and unusual game that's brilliantly fun to play. The mix of arcade action and the sim sections will also spread *The Horde*'s appeal. The only weakness is that it's a little limited.

eighty-five percent

m²

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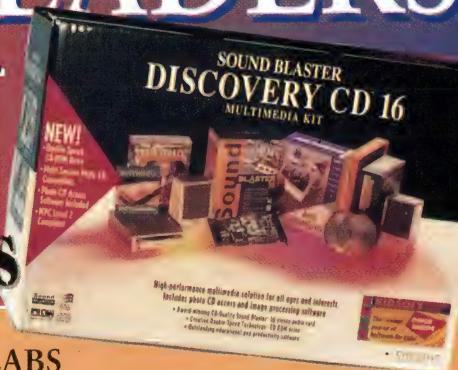
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Dragon's Lair

Take an evil dragon, a beautiful princess and a brave hero, and you have the latest conversion of Sullivan Bluth's arcade classic.



Top left: "Come an' have a go if you think you're hard enough!"

Middle left: This is what you're risking your life for; a beautiful, blonde princess.

Bottom left: While Dirk is walking through a seemingly deserted crypt, a party of ghosts ambush him from behind.



Dragon's Lair has been converted from its arcade origins onto most home computer formats over the past few years. The original arcade version used a laser disk to store all of the video data, and was of a very high quality. The cartoon itself was made especially for the game by professional artists, so you can imagine the interest that the game generated when it was released into the arcades. Many of the home computers that it was converted to couldn't use any form of Full Motion Video (they simply didn't have the processing power, let alone the graphical capabilities) and a CD-ROM drive was unheard of, thus the game was converted into sets of animation files, with each frame being hand drawn from scratch.

With the advent of CD-ROM technology, the possibility for this type of game on a home computer finally became reality. Double-speed drives are quite capable of producing Full Motion Video, but the computer still requires a little bit of help. The most recent step towards acceptable quality video on computers was made with the launch of Sigma Design's ReelMagic card. But with a hefty price tag of £400, not many PC owners can afford such a luxury. This is a great shame, as the ReelMagic version of this game is highly impressive. It uses MPEG compression to store the video data, speeding up the video to near perfect quality. This is all done with hardware, however, and the real trick is to do the same thing (or near enough

the same thing) with software.

Step in Elite and Epicenter Interactive Designs. They have taken the original game, stuck it on a CD-ROM and, with a few clever bits of code, have produced the nearest thing to Full Motion Video that you're likely to see without an MPEG card. All of the original video has been used to make up the sequences, and the quality of that video is surprisingly very good; better than anything you'd care to mention in fact. The only downside to all of this is that you need a reasonable machine to run it: a 486DX is recommended, as is a VESA local bus video card; but then these sort of specifications are fast becoming the norm.

In *Dragon's Lair*, you play the part of Dirk; a daring young knight whose one true love has been kidnapped by an evil dragon. Retreating to his lair, the dragon imprisons the beautiful princess in the deepest dungeons of his castle. A hero's got to do what a hero's got to do, so you promptly set out to rescue her.

Each section of the game is made up of what can only be described as a 'mini-sketch'. Each of

"All the original video has been used and the quality is better than anything you'd care to mention..."



Above: The Dark Knight tries to skewer your liver at high speed. Dirk is about to leap out of the way, but will he be able to make it in time? I don't think so!

Right: Dirk isn't too pleased when he dies, and promptly crumbles and fractures into bones before your very eyes.



Above: The last scene involves Dirk in a desperate struggle against the evil dragon.

these revolves around Dirk's actions, which are controlled via the keyboard or a joystick. You do not have full control over him, rather you control his reactions to events around him. Dirk can conceivably do anything within the realms of the cartoon world, but you can only tell him to either move or fight using his trusty sword.

Infuriating

During the game, the reaction to control movements changes with each scene. For instance, in one scene, pushing the 'up' cursor key may make Dirk walk to the far end of the room, whereas in another scene, it may make him climb through a hole in the ceiling. Many people don't like this kind of control method, mainly due to the precise timing that it requires. Other players will question whether it's really a game at all – it's like playing a shoot'em-up where you only have control of the fire button. It's a good point, but then when was the last time

you played a shoot'em-up with full-screen, Full Motion Video?

The control mechanism does make *Dragon's Lair* frustrating, even infuriating at times. You may be making all the right moves, but just can't seem to get past a scene. This has been a problem on every version of this game and although it's less apparent here, there is still the occasional scene when nothing you do can make Dirk escape a horrible death. Lovers of the genre argue that this is one of *Dragon's Lair*'s great aspects. True, some of the death scenes are so funny you'll find yourself killing Dirk just to see him die in some nasty, unspeakable way. (The current favourite is when Dirk gets squashed by an avalanche of falling rubble; highly entertaining, in a morbid kind of way). For others, however, it's just a reminder of how limiting this kind of game really is. You're never really in control – you're just there to direct the film footage – and if that's the case why don't you pop down to the nearest video store and rent the latest Disney movie? It's far less demanding and a whole lot more interesting.

Dragon's Lair did appeal to me, mainly because I loved the original arcade game and this is the closest that you can get to it without a ReelMagic video card. I doubt whether this game will have lasting appeal for most people, though. If you have the chance, try *Dragon's Lair* before you buy it, simply because this is a game you'll either love or hate to death.

• DINO BONI

FULL POWER

Dragon's Lair
Publisher: Elite
Contact: 0922-55852
Developer: Epicenter Interactive
Price: £39.99

REQUIREMENTS

368DX or above;
4Mb EMS RAM; VGA;
CD-ROM drive; keyboard.
Supports: All major sound cards;
joystick.

PUBLISHER'S SAY

Dragon's Lair offers the end-user state-of-the-art graphics as well as some of the best sounds around in games at the moment. The gameplay is easily accessible, yet the control is difficult to master.

PC POWER'S SAY

The graphics are certainly amongst the hottest images seen on a PC yet. Sound FX are good too, though there could have been more effects during the game. Saying the control is difficult must be the understatement of the year.

BREAKDOWN

Graphics

+ Wonderful. Simply astounding. The Full Motion Video off the CD shows what can be done.

Sound

+ Great FX and some speech certainly set the atmosphere.
- FX within the actual game are lacking a little bit.

Playability

- Frustrating control system makes the game almost unplayable at times.

SUMMARY

This game can't be judged by looks alone. If you can get on with the control system, you'll love it, otherwise you'll loathe it from the very bottom of your soul.

seventy percent



Detroit

We've had simulation cities and even simulation ants. Now, Kirsten Foster revs up her capitalistic power-lust and gets into the driving seat of the first car-industry sim.

Page 13 of *Detroit*'s tutorial manual contains just four words which sum up the philosophy behind this and other strategy-simulation games: "make money, not friends."

This communicates the basic power-urge which creates interest in *Sim-City*, *Sim-Ant* or any one of the numerous Sim-take-over-the-Universe games which proliferate on the market. Don't worry, I'm not going to give you any psycho-babble about the disenfranchisement of

the individual in modern society leading to the internalising of our lusts for power. But the point behind all of these games is to spread your control as widely and deeply as possible throughout the sim-world in question.

Accepting this seedy urge for power as the *raison-d'être* for strategy-sims, it's only fair to expect these games to give you as much control as possible. The problem is that sims need to process huge amounts of data in order to cover the vast combinations of options available to the player. This means there may be large areas

where you, as a player, have no control. This is incredibly frustrating for the dedicated, megalomaniac sim-fanatic. *Detroit* is one of these sims which tantalise you with dreams of world-domination only to leave you with little more power than is left in a Sinclair C5 after a particularly steep hill.

The game's scenario starts in the year 1908, a time of "streets...filled with horse-drawn carriages and wagons, where no one has even heard of gas stations – or auto-mechanics' bills." Or, presumably, global warming and holes in the ozone layer. Sounds idyllic, doesn't it? Well, you're just the person to change all that. "You're a bright young entrepreneur with a dream: to use the new technology of the assembly line to bring the automobile to the average man, and thereby build a company that will last a hundred years and reach every corner of the globe." You'll also bring chronic lung disease and skin cancer to future generations – but that's enough of my liberal-conscience whining.

Accuracy

You start the game with one factory and one sales office and \$60,000 in capital funds. You can choose which territory you want to base your nascent empire in. The Western world – North America and Northern Europe are the easiest places to start from. Try China or Africa for more of a challenge. This is because *Detroit* does contain some historical and geographical accuracy. For instance, demand for cars will fall during the Great Depression, the two World Wars and the Oil Crisis. Demand is also affected by the seasons. The level of technology available to you is also restricted by historical accuracy. New technological developments have to be discovered by your technicians, or, if three companies discover a new technology, it

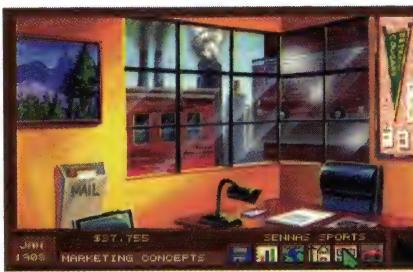
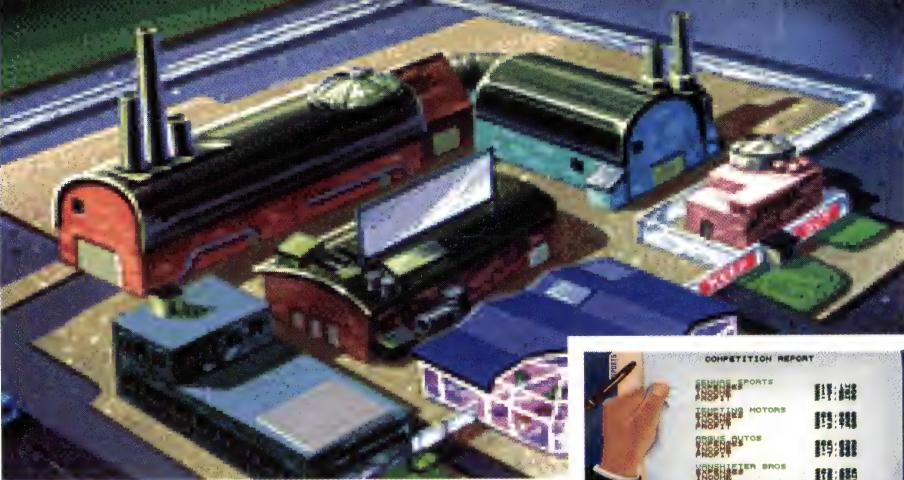


Above: Designing your cars is fun but your options are limited by the technology available. **Below:** The Crash Test Dummies go out for a spin to celebrate their Top Five hit.

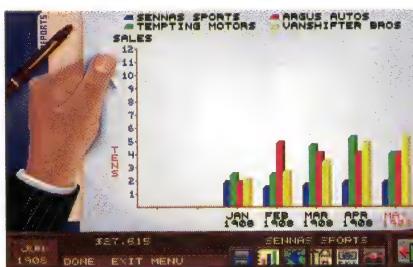


Above: Your designs are tested to their limits. **Below:** The Administration office. You can access personnel screens, order reports and save and load games from here.





There are loads of reports you can call up to tell you how well you're doing. The trouble is, they all say the same thing. Nice, colourful bar charts though.



becomes open to all. Inflation will increase your costs through time and you'll have to take account of this in wages and prices. Historical accuracy also means that you can't advertise on radio or TV until they've been invented.

Your company is represented on the main screen by an illustration of the outside view of the various departments – sales and factories, administration, research, design, marketing and a building representing the archive department. This is where you can store any old car designs, which you don't want to keep as current, but which you may want to look back on. Click on these buildings to access the screens relevant to the various aspects of the company they represent; e.g. click on the research building and you are presented with an internal view of a room with a technician and various bits and pieces being researched. Click on an engine and you are shown a list of all the engine types that are available. You can do the same with the suspension, brakes etc. It is this graphical representation of information which is the most interesting aspect of *Detroit*. It makes the display of information easier to access and makes interaction with the game seem more human and real, and therefore more interesting.

The information and option screens are generally easy to access and manipulate and it will take little time for you to get into the game. Time progresses in turns of one month's duration. You can do as much or as little as you like in your turn. When you have finished, you click on the calendar which moves the game on to the end of the month. This is the main problem with the game. Time moves so slowly. Screens are slow to update, and the fact that you can only move on one month at a time means that realism increases, but unfortunately, so does boredom.

At the end of each month you are then

presented with a progress report, showing your income and expenditure and your level of profit (hopefully). There's also a number of other reports – on marketing, distribution etc. which enable you to compare the different territories, models and competitors' sales. These are vital to help you learn what you're doing right or wrong.

Breakdown

The basic variables that are under your control are: the design of cars; the price of cars; the placing of offices and factories; the supply lines for sales offices; the number and deployment of employees (assembly workers and research technicians); their wages and benefits and marketing expenditure – advertising and sponsorship. This may seem like a lot to think about, but you'll probably find you're only changing a few of these on each turn and the screens are all easy to use.

The problem is that this game doesn't share the depth of gameplay of something like *Sim City*. I wanted to know more about the markets I was selling to, the social and economic status of my targeted consumer sims. This would have made for a more involving and entertaining game even if it didn't affect the mechanics of gameplay.

Detroit is a nice idea, is easy to use and has some nice touches in its detail. I particularly liked the 'Impressions' watermark paper on the reports screens and the whales popping up for a breather on the world map. However, there just isn't enough to keep you engrossed in *Detroit* for very long. There's not enough control or enough change to hold your interest. Impressions hope that this game will make them some money. I'm not sure it will make them many friends.

• KIRSTEN FOSTER

FULL POWER

Detroit
Publisher: Impressions
Contact: 071-351-2133
Developer: In House
Price: £39.99

REQUIREMENTS

640K RAM; 286 or above;
VGA graphics; MS-DOS 3.0 or above;
mouse: keyboard.
Supports: Soundblaster and
compatibles.

PUBLISHER'S SAY

Detroit is fun, addictive and with its great graphics, is a game of genuine long-term playability. Impressions have developed a completely unique game for a nation of motoring enthusiasts, which is long overdue.

PC POWER'S SAY

The nation's motoring-fans may not appreciate Impressions' efforts on this one. Fun? Yes, for a while. Addictive? Not really. Graphics are good, particularly in the testing scenes and yes, it is an original idea.

BREAKDOWN

Graphics

- + The illustrated scenes add life and colour.
- The whole game looks dated graphically.

Sound

- Few sound effects and insipid, unimaginative music.

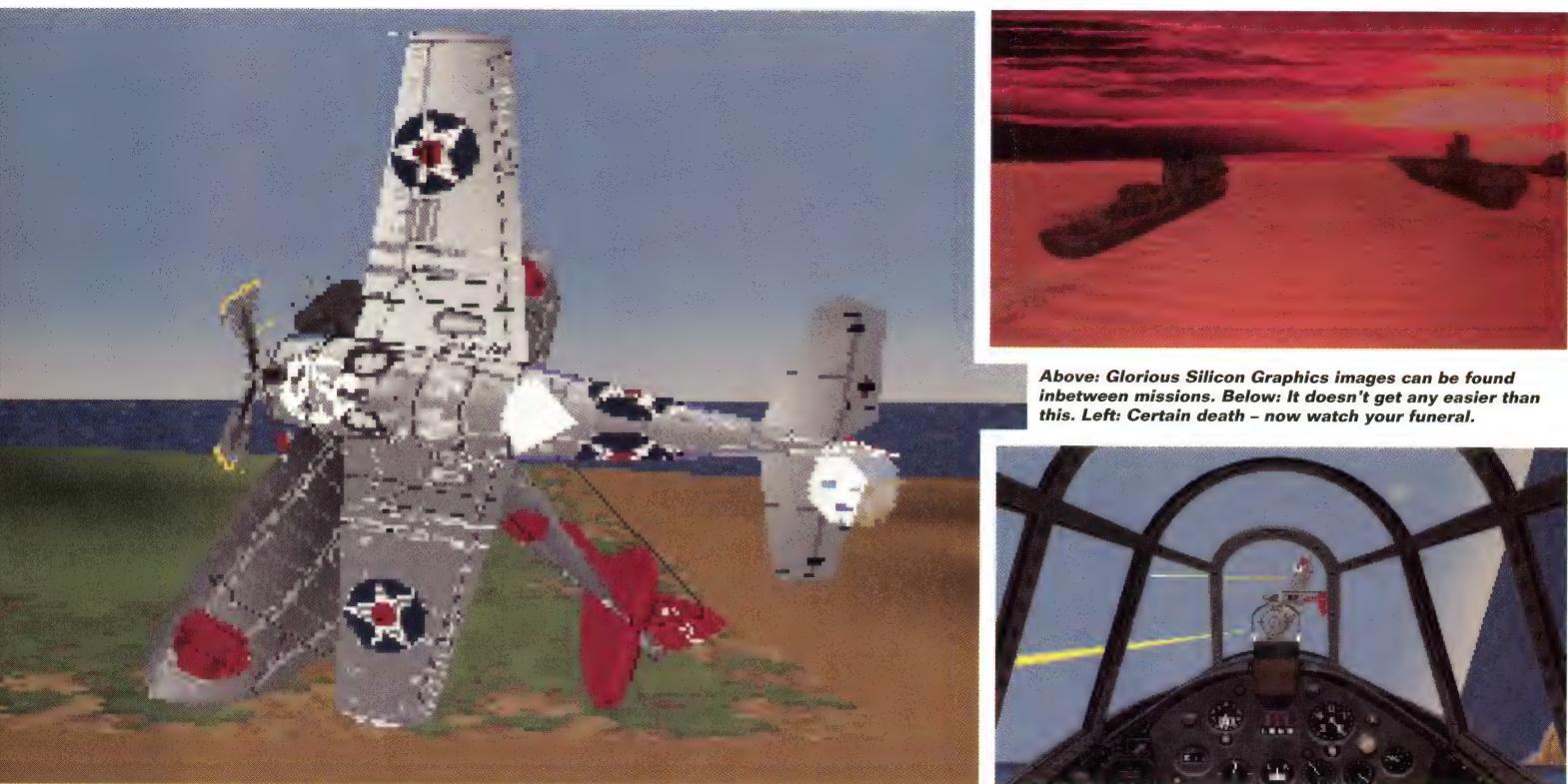
Playability

- + Screens are clear and easy to manipulate.
- Play becomes very repetitive.

SUMMARY

Time moves too slowly and, though some of the graphics liven up the game a little, the promise of world-wide dealerships in 2008 isn't enough to keep playing for.

seventy-two percent



Above: Glorious Silicon Graphics images can be found inbetween missions. Below: It doesn't get any easier than this. Left: Certain death - now watch your funeral.

Pacific Strike



Left: Take off. You can either do this automatically, simply by pressing 'A' or you can be clever and go for the manual approach. The latter in fact isn't that hard to do and anyone brought up with the likes of Tornado or Flight Sim 5 will have no problems at all. **Far Left:** Failure in a mission means one thing - death.

Origin jump back from the future to release their latest flight sim, *Pacific Strike*. Lieutenant Dave Westley reports from the thick of battle.

With Origin's predilection for a strong cinematic narrative to twist and turn through their flight sims/adventures it's always seemed a shrewd move to stay within the realm of the future. There, at least, inaccuracy isn't that much of a problem – if you give a plane a little too much horse power no pedant is going to get all huffy and puffy with your imaginative use of statistics to create an



Right: On a bombing raid. Circling at 10,000 feet you begin your dive bomb, preparing to pull up at 2,000 feet, or eat enemy flak.
Left: Be sure not to get too near an enemy ship – the fireworks being released can be devastating for a pilot caught within its heavyweight reach.

mission editor

Once you've reached a certain level of expertise in *Pacific Strike* you'll be able to set up your own parameters of battle. Your first promotion will be to Lieutenant which will allow you to choose which plane (and which weapons) you want. The second promotion is to Lieutenant Commander, which will allow you to plan your missions with the Mission Editor. This gives you the same amount of control as you have in the Instant Action mode, except of course that you cannot determine the strength of your opponent...



"To keep everyone happy you don't have to go straight into a mission – Origin provide a facility for the arcade-oriented to zoom into the instant gratification of battle."

Indeed if you squint your eyes just a little you'll see the same characters featured in Chris Roberts' original game – there are the same chiselled jaws, the same pearly white teeth, the same leather skin and the same crinkly blue eyes.

To keep everyone as happy as possible you don't have to go straight into the first mission. Origin have provided a facility for the arcade-oriented player to zoom into the instant gratification of battle – as you choose from a dog fight, a ground attack or ship attack. These are training missions and allow you to perfect the art of flying before you enter the game scenario – nothing that you do here affects your status within the game itself. You can determine how many planes to take, choose objectives as diverse as bombing, torpedo attack and escorting – even choose which side to be on!

Familiar

Those of you who have played *Wing Commander/Strike Commander* won't really need the training, however. The control mechanism is very similar to its prequels and becomes second nature in a matter of moments. More surprisingly perhaps, there's an instant arcadian adrenaline rush – the opening scene has your base attacked with you sitting in your plane ready for a dog fight; flack skimming past your craft, threatening to blow you into a zillion pieces before you've even taken off!

As you'd expect, the difficulty level increases as you weave your way through this adventure. For the uninitiated, however, even these opening



sections will be difficult enough. Kamikaze pilots stick like super glue and you're going to have to perfect the art of a Split-S, inverted negative G dive, high and low Yo-Yos and a host of other sophisticated combat manoeuvres if you hope to shake one of these tenacious beasts off your back. As the manual will tell you, early Japanese planes had a lot more manoeuvrability than American ones, which opted for speed instead...

It's the skill of your opponents that makes this game a real joy to play. Though there's a definite arcade feel to the proceedings you still have to have your thinking cap on at all times. It may well be true that the AI of computerised creations is limited, but you never feel that here. The Japanese pilots are always far too clever for your own good...

As you'd expect of an Origin game, the graphics in *Pacific Strike* are never less than excellent – everything is beautifully rendered with the most impressive shading we've ever seen. Indeed, attention to detail is such that if you adopt one of the external views you can even see yourself flying the plane.

There is a down side to the sumptuous graphics, however. Many people found *Strike Commander* unplayable simply because the graphics were too ambitious for the machines of the day – and many people will have the same problem here. On a 486DX2 66MHz everything is fine and dandy – the game runs relatively smoothly and you wouldn't even think of turning down the detail level. With any lesser machines, however, the player is going to be forced to do

enjoyable game. The designer is free to tinker with all the variables he/she likes – as long as it doesn't get silly.

Pacific Strike is set in WWII, however, and crotchety old peeps like myself do tend to get annoyed when we find that our favourite aeroplanes aren't our aeroplanes at all – that they've been modified in the name of gameplay. It may well be a higher good but I can't help thinking that there must be another way around the problem of making a game an enjoyable experience – e.g. stick it in the unwritten future.

Fortune smiles on us all today, however, for despite this being very much virgin territory for Origin, they've done a very good job at keeping gameplay within the realms of the plausible. True, it's not one of the most complicated/realistic flight sims PC Power has ever come across, but neither is it an *Evasive Action*. Rather, it sits comfortably between the latter and a game like *Tornado*. If you want to use the automatic take-off facility, feel free; but if you want to be a real man and do what every milk drinking airline pilot has done since the dawn of the throttle, you can power yourself up into the skies manually.

One of the better things in Origin's games is that nothing is ever done in a vacuum; there's always some sort of storyline to provide an intelligible backdrop for all of your actions. *Pacific Strike* is no different in this. In fact, the game works in exactly the same way as *Wing Commander* did all those years ago, with a Mess Hall, Briefing Room and Commanders' Quarters.

in perspective

Wing Commander

In a desperate struggle against an alien race, you are recruited into the war to fight for the survival of Earth. The enemy is the Kilrathi, a race of intelligent cat-like creatures, who despise humans and all they hold dear. Origin's first game featured texture-mapped 3-D graphics and a simple, but absorbing storyline. The game saw the beginning of a brilliant career for Chris Roberts, and marked the start of a new breed of PC games.

Wing Commander 2

The battle against the Kilrathi rages on, but after the destruction of the carrier that you served on, many people, including your commanding officer, think you have turned traitor and destroyed it yourself. You get posted to a distant listening post, nursing your wounds and hoping to get back into the fighting.

You get your chance to fight again, and your chance to prove that the Kilrathi have developed invisible fighters, thus clearing your name. This game used the *Wing Commander I* game engine, but with enormous improvements on speed and playability. Speech was also added for the first time in the form of a separate speech pack, a format that Origin have stuck with ever since.

Strike Commander

Using the same graphics engine as the *Wing Commander* Series, this air-combat sim should've been just as good, if not better than its predecessors. This was not to be. The game was just too ambitious for the average machine at the time, and was slow and unplayable. Some people still think of *Strike Commander* fondly, but most of them are rich, spoilt people who could afford very fast machines. I'm not bitter, I promise!

Privateer

Set in the *Wing Commander* universe, this game promised everything and delivered very little. Billed as a cross between *Wing Commander* and *Elite*, the space trading element was well received, but the combat side of the game was very poor indeed. That didn't stop Origin from releasing *Righteous Fire*, a mission disk for the game.

► just that. *Pacific Strike* will be okay on a 486SX 25 – only if all of the detail is turned off.

That will undermine a lot of the game's appeal. Some of the FX are superb. When you do manage to get behind an enemy, and can keep him there long enough to get a few well timed hits in, you'll see his plane disintegrate around him, parts of his wing, body, etc. hurtling towards you too fast to avoid. Alternatively, dive bomb a ship successfully and you can watch it explode, burning metal hissing into the sea around it – wanton destruction that's not only fun, but with the realism it adds, makes *Pacific Strike* one of the most addictive games we've ever had in for review.

In fact *Pacific Strike* generated more excitement than any other product we've seen in recent months, and is thoroughly recommended to everyone. Flight sim fans will forgive its simplicity on account of the authentic, scary feeling of being amidst a battle, whilst arcade lovers will go loopy over the dog fights. If you're the proud owner of a DX2 beast get this, and make us lesser mortals green with envy.

● DAVE WESTLEY



Above: Your plane lies in wait in its hangar. You can use it only after a mission briefing.



Like *Wing Commander* you'll get a little help from your friends in the form of advice.



FULL POWER

Pacific Strike
Publisher: Electronic Arts
Contact: 0753-549-442
Developer: Origin
Price: £49.99

REQUIREMENTS

486 SX 25MHz (preferably a DX2 66MHz);
4Mb (preferably 8Mb) RAM.
Supports: All major soundcards; joystick.

PUBLISHER'S SAY

Origin has applied the same groundbreaking technology from *Strike Commander* to a historical conflict. *Pacific Strike* has all the cinematic action, stunning graphics and richly atmospheric depth of its predecessor.

PC POWER'S SAY

Pacific Strike is unarguably a superbly polished game. Unfortunately the only people that are going to be able to get real enjoyment out of this game are those with idiotically powerful PCs. A must-have if you're that rich and lucky.

BREAKDOWN

Graphics

- + Visually stunning with impressive rendered graphics, texture mapping...
- Which means if your machine isn't a 486DX2 say goodbye to speed.

Sound

- + Excellent FX with speech pack.
- Not quite so good without.

Playability

- + If your machine's powerful enough to cope, *Pacific Strike* will provide hours, days, months of enjoyment.

SUMMARY

Something of a return to form for Origin who were let down rather badly with *Privateer*. *Pacific Strike* is nothing less than amazing and everyone who comes into contact with it will love it.

ninety percent

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WORLD OF WONDERS 2

Empire Soccer '94

Football fever is about to reach an all-time high. The World Cup should be in full swing by the time you read this, so Dino Boni investigates Empire's addition to the PC football sim market.



Don't worry. I'm not going to start moaning again about England's failure to get into the World Cup. Besides, seeing as I'm Italian, I can still root for my team when this media-circus of a tournament starts in a few weeks. Many software houses have anticipated the surge of interest that the World Cup will generate, and have produced games to capitalise on it. Empire, not wanting to feel left out, have converted their hit SNES game, *Empire Soccer*, to the PC and they've tried to update it by giving it a heavy World Cup theme.

Upon loading, you are presented with the all-too-familiar menu. This offers either World Cup, Practise or Friendly modes of play as well as the obligatory Options screen. The Practise and Friendly modes are pretty self-explanatory, but the main World Cup mode has some nice features added to it that are worth a small mention. There is an option called Randomise Teams that does just that. The game quickly picks out a random selection of teams from around the world to play in the tournament, which can deliver some very funny match-ups. Somehow, I don't think you're liable to see Bolivia versus Nigeria in the World Cup this year.

When you've selected your team, you're taken through the other matches in your group before it's your turn to play. If you don't want to play a match, you can tell the game to calculate a score, based on the teams' expertise and ability. The Match Options screen allows you to select your team's formation, their special skill (more of this later) and control method. You also have two difficulty settings that can be altered from this screen. Novice makes the ball stick to your



Above: After scoring a goal, the players run around in fits of joy. This player was so pleased with his goal that he ran into the back of the net and stayed there!

Right: The players run out onto the pitch in an orderly, neat fashion. They all look like clones, don't they?



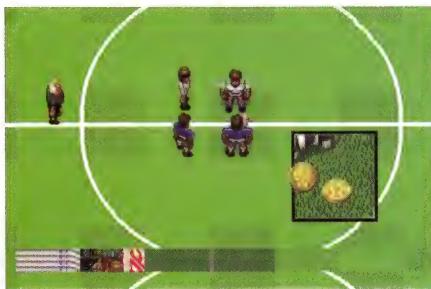
Left: Number 15 of the Irish team makes a spectacular header into the back of the net, while the goalie does his aerobics work-out exercises.



Above: The Match Options menu lets you select different options for each team.



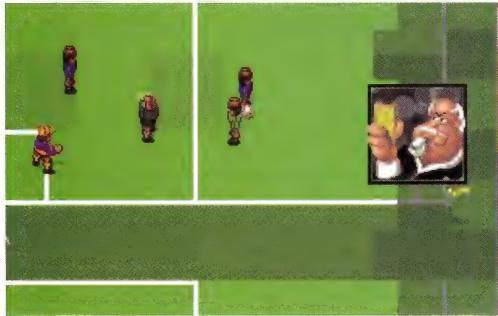
Above: Free kicks are well represented in the game. The opposing players even form walls.



Above: The coin-toss at the beginning of the game decides who defends which goal.



Above: The half and full-time stats screens provide plenty of useless info about your team.



Above: Naughty boy! One more like that and it's back to the dressing room for you, son!

players' feet when they have possession, making the game perfect for first-time players. Pro mode uses a free-moving ball, forcing you to learn how to control the ball without losing possession.

Pass masters

Once you've chosen all your options, it's a quick click on the Play icon and away you go. The two teams run onto the pitch and take up their positions quickly and smoothly, which is surprising for sprites that are fairly large by PC standards. All of the usual controls and moves are available in the game, with a few added extras.

Overhead kicks and diving headers can produce some spectacular goals if used correctly, but this is going to take a bit of practise as they are quite fiddly to execute. (Don't forget that the original SNES version has a six-buttoned joypad to play around with.) To pass the ball, you have to keep the kick button pressed down and as soon as a player receives the ball, he will 'trap' it with his foot. You can then swivel round on the spot and pass it to another one of your players.

Because of the need to press the kick button down before you receive the ball, it is not possible to run with the ball and then pass it to one of your players. Graftgold say this is to promote a fast-paced game, and I can well believe them – but it makes passing bloody difficult to do. It's further evidence that this is an arcade game rather than a sim. *Empire Soccer '94* is no thinking man's game.

You can select a special ability for each team from the Match Options screen. The choices are varied, with each one lending a helping hand when it comes to winning matches. The Banana Shot option is the most consistently useful for

scoring goals, but you can choose from others such as Speed Burst, Super Dribble (makes the ball stick to your feet in Pro mode) and Power Drive (a super-powerful shot). If you throw a few players into the penalty area and get them to perform some diving headers and overhead kicks, the goals produced will be worth watching over and over again.

This brings us nicely to the next feature of the game, which is the in-game Option menu. This can be accessed at any time during a match by pressing the escape key. The game pauses while you muck about to your heart's content. From this menu, you can substitute a player, change your team's formation, restart the game or watch an action replay. The action replay really comes into its own when you want to show off a particularly stunning goal to a friend. The replay option records the last 10 seconds or so of play. You can rewind or fast-forward through it to find the piece of footage that you want to view.

The game is viewed from the standard overhead camera, but the player sprites are slightly larger than usual. (No Sensi-type matchstick men in this game!) The pitch is fairly large and scrolls about with surprising smoothness. All of the stills throughout the game are very well drawn (I really like the fat referee), but the sprites, although large, all look the same except for their strip and skin colour.

Sound effects are a sore point with me at the moment, but I'm pleased to say that *Empire Soccer '94* provides plenty of samples, whistles and cheers throughout the game. Even some of the music is worth listening to. A high accolade indeed, considering the poor state of music in games nowadays.

To sum up, *Empire Soccer '94* has been produced to be more of an arcade game rather than an all-out simulation and therefore may not hold your interest for too long. Anyone who's having loads of problems getting to grips with other football games like *Kick Off* or *Sensi Soccer* will appreciate its simplicity and addictive gameplay. *Empire Soccer '94* is therefore recommended to anyone who hates playing football simulations and would rather play a football game. Go ahead and enjoy yourself with this one, but try not to cry too much when you watch the real World Cup. We'll get it next time.

● DINO BONI

FULL POWER

Empire Soccer '94

Publisher: Empire

Contact: 081-343-7337

Developer: Graftgold

Price: £39.99

REQUIREMENTS

386SX or above;

VGA; 2Mb RAM;

keyboard; mouse.

Supports: Adlib; joystick.

PUBLISHER'S SAY

Empire Soccer '94 is all you need to bring the excitement of the World Cup into your own living room. Authentic crowd noises from each individual country add to the atmosphere. Play it now and you'll still be playing in 1998!

PC POWER'S SAY

The World Cup may be lacking an English team this time, but we can all find solace in *Empire Soccer '94*. I don't think we'll be playing this in four years time, however. Two years is a more realistic timescale!

BREAKDOWN

Graphics

+ Large sprites and lovely still pictures. Smooth scrolling – GraftGold have done an excellent job.

Sound

+ Plenty of spot FX during the game and some pretty catchy music.

Playability

+ The Novice mode is perfect for an arcade-style game. The World Cup mode will keep you going for some time.

SUMMARY

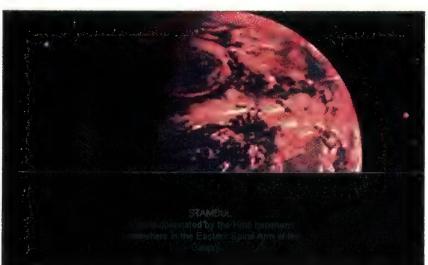
Apart from the fiddly passing control, *Empire Soccer '94* is one of the top football games on the PC at the moment. If you want arcade action – buy this.

eighty-five percent

Below right:
One of the
many fates that
could befall
you should you
fall in your
quest.
Although it
seems you
needn't bother
fighting the
Kroll - lung
cancer will do
the job for you.
Right: Now's
the time to get
worried - these
are your
friends!



Spaceship Warlock



This planet looks nice enough from up here. Unfortunately you have to get a little closer and risk being mugged or hospitalised by the local brew.

You know how it is, you're enjoying a nice space cruise, when your ship is overrun by pirates led by an American rap artist. Kirsten Foster begs 'Hammer, don't hurt me.'

Travel on the *Spaceship Warlock* and you travel through the world of Hitchhiker's Guide, Terry Pratchett and Star Wars; the world of colonising aliens, big-breasted, rubber-clad females, campily bickering robots, grotesquely mutated and dumb sidekicks, nuclear and toxic waste galore and a Wizard of Oz-style dream of a sweet and peaceful home planet lost beyond the stars. OK, so it's a little cliché-ridden. You can visit the obligatory bar, get smashed on the ever so popular alien 'get-pissed-so-quick-you'll-think-someone's-shoved-an-AK47-up-your-bottom-and-let-rip' local brew, interact with the futuristic cash machine, take a ride in the alien-driven taxi. But clichés are what *SS Warlock* is all about. It's a tongue-in-cheek romp of a homage to all those films, TV series, books and games which have created the futuristic, sci-fi, fantasy mindset, a culture we all recognise and many of us hold dear.

The basic storyline is this: the great Terran Empire has been destroyed after a pan-galactic

war with the Kroll which lasted for over 1,000 years. The Kroll have removed the planet Terra (I think they mean the Earth) from its orbit and hidden it in Kroll-guarded space. The Terrans have bowed in terror to their Kroll masters, but Terran progeny have spread galaxy-wide and vow to fight against the Kroll oppressors. Some have become space pirates, disrupting Kroll trade. One, the legendary rebel commander Hammer, searches for the greatest booty of all – the lost planet of Terra. This is where you come in. Initially a prisoner of Hammer, the captain recognises your talents and you become a valued member of his crew. Hopefully, after many battles, you are victorious over the Kroll, and return to Terra triumphant, to claim a snog from the delicious Stella Starbird!

Spaceship Warlock begins promisingly enough, with cinematic-style title sequences and a theme tune that'll buckle your swashes and shiver your timbers. Space Pirates are go! The first scenes are really atmospheric, too, as you wander the streets of the typically futuristic, alien



and alienating cyber-city – Blade Runner has never been so well ripped off. The mean streets are empty, save for a few cops. Like any self-respecting graphic-adventurer you should avoid these custodians of the law – they'll find you soon enough. The streets are bleached periodically in neon from the bars and girlie joints which seem to be the only businesses in this soulless town (sound like anywhere you know?). Information and indoctrination is available on every street corner. Video screens blurt out short propaganda messages and a 'Comlink' allows you to call any number of 'entities', including the spaceports. It'll also sell you the ticket to get out of this hell-hole.

Movement through the game is stepped and is controlled by the ever popular point-and-click method. You see the 3-D world through a first-person perspective. The interface is easy to control but updating is rather slow. This is disappointing because, although the graphics are good, reminiscent of *Myst*, they are not spectacular. Animation too, is not up to standards seen elsewhere. Also the game is displayed in a 'widescreen' letterbox style, only taking up about a third of the screen. Considering all this, it

"When the call goes through type anything (oh, very interactive!) and you will be 'faxed' a flight schedule. The flight schedule is white and sticks out of the megafax slot." Now, maybe you disagree but I think there's a fine line between being helpful and being obscenely obvious. I think we've just crossed it.

Apart from the hints in the book, there are also on-screen prompts to help the terminally without-a-clue. You're told to rest in your cabin by the firm but fair Captain Hammer. You've got the number so you trundle along quite happily, checking the numbers of the other cabins to find yours. Oh, what a silly waste of brainpower. As you approach your cabin an on-screen prompt lights up with glee and screams 'look, there's your cabin, no. 23, over there, next to no.25, opposite no.24.' Well thanks a bunch, I'd never have guessed!

This is a bit unfair. The prompts are often helpful, and you can ignore them if you wish. The trouble is, with all this help you're tempted to just get on with the game and solve it as soon as possible. If you do this, however, you miss out on the thrill of exploration, discovering all the little extra bits that are an integral part of graphic

You wander the streets of a typically alienating cyber-city. Blade Runner was never ripped off so well."

would have been nice if movement through the game could have been a little speedier. Patience is not a virtue that pirates should possess.

Another frustrating aspect of the game is its combat style. Individual gun battles with other beings are fine, if a little easy. You just click on your gun and a cross-hair appears. Aim at the right places and the Kroll will be foiled in no time. Space combat is a wholly different ball game. You don't aim, you just have to time your shots for when the enemy crosses your line of fire. This is intensely stressful, as the enemy craft seem entirely unpredictable. You just have to keep saving the game and try, try again. The third time seems to be the lucky one. Make the most of these challenges, though, because they're possibly the only taxing moments you'll have.

If you're the type who took your Rubik's cube apart and rebuilt it with all the colours in their proper places – shame on you. You're also the type of person who should appreciate the mechanics of this game. It's very linear, like one of those roads in Arizona, or the trench in *Delta V*, or something else that's very straight. In the game's reference manual, you are given explicit instructions on the first part of the game. You don't have to read them, but if you want a little hint you're stuck. It's either a great big, full-blown 'you're a dummy, dummy' solution or nowt. I'll give you an example of the type of 'hint' that's provided:

adventures: the cut-away animations, secret rooms and peripheral characters that build depth and flavour to a game. *Warlock* does have these, but impatience with the game may mean they are sacrificed to the god of 'getting to the end'.

Sadly, *Warlock* is another game that's a nice idea gone sour. Whether this is through inadequate technology, money or poor programming, is not for me to say. It seems as if the producers of this game, like many others, were so bewitched by the idea of interaction, they believed they could give you that 'really there' feeling by filling the game with endless corridors. Do these people actually play these games? Wake up guys! The dream of virtual reality and interactive technology is to recreate reality in the realms of our imagination, to make it what we want it to be. We don't want 'realistic' virtual reality – virtual 'going to the toilet', virtual 'popping out for a pint of milk', virtual 'waiting for the bus'. But all too often this is the level of excitement you get in so-called virtual and interactive games. Even games as *Myst* and *7th Guest* make the same mistakes, but at least they have the looks and the gameplay to make up for it. *SS Warlock* looks good and plays well but not well enough to compensate for corridor-trudging. Sadly, it ultimately just doesn't deliver the goods.

• KIRSTEN FOSTER

This screen-shot sums up Warlock perfectly. This shot contains some wonderfully atmospheric and textured graphics. But it heralds the entry to a tedious maze.



FULL POWER

Spaceship Warlock
Publisher: Ubi Soft
Contact: 081-343-9055
Developer: Reactor
Price: £49.99

REQUIREMENTS

386 or above; DOS 3.3 or above;
Windows 3.1; mouse; 560Kb base
memory; 4Mb RAM; VGA or SVGA 256
colours; CD-ROM drive.
Supports: SoundBlaster or compatibles.

PUBLISHER'S SAY

Robustly detailed and dazzling in its sweep and depth, *Spaceship Warlock* is a blazing, swash-buckling, science-fiction epic! *Spaceship Warlock* is an interactive saga you can experience again and again.

PC POWER'S SAY

There's certainly plenty of swash-buckling in this game and there are some parts with atmospheric details, but I doubt you'll want to experience this game more than once. It feels like a real saga. It seems to go on forever.

BREAKDOWN

Graphics

- + SVGA graphics deliver high quality textured environments.
- A lack of variety in colour and detail.

Sound

- + Brilliantly hammy theme tune.
- Lack of sound effects.

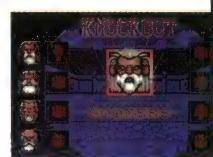
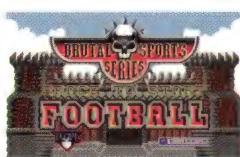
Playability

- + The story and characterisation get you involved.
- It's too slow, too easy and far too realistically tedious.

SUMMARY

This game is hammy than a pork scratching and bacon sandwich. It's fun to play but the gameplay isn't strong enough to reinforce this light and fluffy piece of software.

sixty-seven percent



Left: A frantic dive for the ball misses the mark. Could be painful for this hapless player. **Right:** Goal-mouth scraps are all too common in a Brutal Football match.



Brutal Football

Is American Football too tame for you? Would you like to see more blood, gore and rolling heads? If so, Dino Boni has the game for you.

Way back in 2034, American Football finally died a death. Audience boredom and lack of support killed off what used to be one of the most popular sports in the world. Then along came Mr. Dan Syc, the inventor of Brutal Football. He gave the public a different version of the old game, with a few added features.

The first Brutal Football matches were played by humans, and proved to be extremely popular. However, interest began to die as quickly as the players did. Games lasted barely minutes before everyone was dead and two teams dominated this violent period: the Branded Bazookas and the high-flying National Nukers.

The ultimate confrontation between these two Goliath teams drew enormous crowds to the Badlands Arena where the game was to be played. The Nukers finally lived up to their name and, as soon as the whistle went, they declared war on the opposing team: thermonuclear war. The entire land mass of Utopia was destroyed and the match was deemed a no-score draw.

This setback may have brought the game to a premature end, if it hadn't been for the intervention of Professor Graham Geek. He genetically engineered bi-ped players, removing the human element completely and setting up the Brutal Football league on a sure footing.

You are in control of a new team in the league. There are four divisions, and you start at the bottom of the fourth. Using a combination of skill and wanton destruction, you must make your way to the top of Division One and crown yourself as league champion.

The game is played on a grassy pitch with goals at both ends. The objective is much the same as rugby – pick up the ball and run or throw it into your opponent's goal. On the pitch are special power-ups that give your team destructive powers for a limited amount of time and weapons which can be picked up and used against the

opposition. The winner of the game is the team that scores the most goals, or kills six out of seven players (on the opposing team).

After each game you are given money, the amount depending on whether or not you won and how many players you killed. This money is used to keep your team in tip-top shape by repairing them in the locker room. Players often get their heads chopped or kicked off and even this can be remedied, but it all costs money.

Kick'em-up

Brutal Football provides three modes of play: League, Unfriendly and Knockout. The League mode is for one player only, whereas the other two can be played by two players. The League mode is the most fun, but suffers from a similarity to so many other games. Once you are on the field of battle, you take control of your team in much the same way as many normal football games. You control only one player at a time, while the computer controls the rest. Both fire buttons on the joystick are used, or the keyboard will suffice if you don't possess a joystick. The fire buttons control passing, shooting and killing, depending on whether you have the ball or not.

The most satisfying part of this game is the violence. Blood sprays everywhere when you kill an opposing player and I especially like the way you can kick a downed player to death! The actual game itself, though, is disappointing. The first few computer opponents are easy to beat, but after that, it gets really tough. The games are all the same and there's little variety in gameplay.

The graphics are good on *Brutal Football*, but the scrolling could've been much improved. The sound is also well below average. All in all, *Brutal Football* is a game that could've been something special but falls flat on its face. Lack of variety in the game kills interest dead and you'd be better off buying a decent beat'em-up.

● DINO BONI

FULL POWER

Brutal Football
Publisher: Millennium
Contact: 0223-844-894
Developer: Teque
Price: £29.99

REQUIREMENTS

386SX-20 or above; VGA;
2Mb RAM; keyboard.
Supports: All major sound cards;
joystick.

BREAKDOWN

Graphics

- + Plenty of picturesque gore!
- Scrolling is awful.

Sound

- What sound? The only spot FX you'll hear are a few 'Oomph's'.

Playability

- + Great fun for the first few games.
- Ultimately shallow and disappointing.

SUMMARY

Very disappointing. Even the most hardened, violence-loving player will soon become bored with this very, very mediocre game.

fifty-three percent





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Aegis: Guardian of the Fleet



Naval warfare has moved on a bit since Nelson's day, so Dino Boni dons his captain's hat, slaps on his Rod Stewart CD and sets sail for war.

There is one thing that must be pointed out before I continue this review: this game comes on CD. Therefore, you would expect most of it to run from CD, wouldn't you? Not this game, however. For some, ridiculous reason, Aegis insists on copying over 90% of its data to your hard drive.

This means that, if you don't have a bit of room free on your hard drive, you can't play the game. So why bother with it at all, then?

Well, to be perfectly honest, apart from this rather large complaint, Aegis is rather a good game. You are the captain of a US Navy Triconderoga-class cruiser, a naval battle ship filled to the brim with the latest in military hardware. Not only do you have to steer and navigate the ship, but you must also take on every other role on board. (Well, nearly every one. I doubt that we'll be seeing *Aegis 2: The*

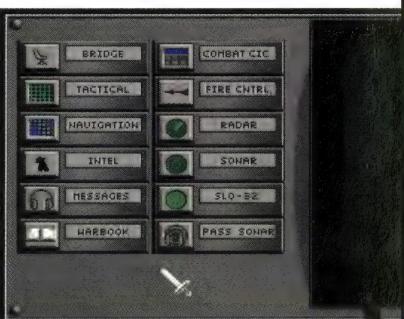
Right: No, this is not a vital part of the game, it's the main menu! If you have a slow machine, I'd advise you to turn off the video clips.



Cook's Revenge in the shops within the near future, but you never know.)

Upon loading, you are presented with the main options screen, which takes the form of a commander's console. From here you can enable and disable some of the more advanced features of the game, including the Full Motion Video clips and digital voices. If you have a slower 486 or even a high-end 386, turning these options off will make the game run much more smoothly and therefore increase your enjoyment. The game can be run in either VGA or SVGA, with obvious

The intercomm unit allows you to select any section of the game from an easy-to-use screen. Nothing could be simpler.





Above: The tactical map gives a complete 3-D representation of the surrounding area, using data collated from the ship's radar systems. warship 'Belgrano'. Time to dish out a small amount of revenge with a Tomahawk missile. The Full Motion Video clips appear when you fire any of the weapons available in the game.



benefits in the SVGA mode. The game can also take advantage of a VESA local bus video card, if you are rich and hip enough to have one.

The entire game is played in real time, but there is a fast-forward facility that enables you to increase the speed by up to 32 times. However, the game's semi-intelligence won't let you speed up if your processor can't handle the pace. Even on a 486DX2, this is a pretty common occurrence, simply because of the vast amounts of calculations that have to be made for every object on the game map.

The deep end

After you have selected your difficulty level, you move swiftly on to choose either a single mission, a single battle or a full campaign. All of these options speak for themselves, but let it be said that playing a few single missions may be a good idea before you embark on a full-blown war.

After a short mission briefing, you are plunged head-first into the deep end. The mission objectives vary, but most of them involve destroying a few land-based targets. You need to master a few of the sub-screens in the game in order to really get to grips with combat missions.

The first screen to become familiar with is the Tactical Display. This is a 3-D representation of your surrounding area, complete with any radar contacts that have been made. Due to the advanced nature of naval radar and sonar systems, the on-board computers can distinguish changes in radar signals and identify targets that may be out of visual range. The radar computer displays each contact as a unique symbol, depending on what type of target it is. This makes your life a lot easier, as swift identification of your enemies is all taken care of for you.

The next screen is the Area of Operations map. It is similar in concept to the Tactical Display, but is only two-dimensional. Friendly, hostile and unknown targets are shown in different colours, and it's also possible to filter out any of the above types of contacts. This is useful in a large battle, when you can filter out all of the friendly contacts (they're hardly likely to fire at you) and just leave in the hostile and unknown contacts. This map also shows land masses, which the tactical map sadly lacks.

There are various other screens that control the radar, sonar and countermeasures, but the most important section of this game is the Fire Control screen. From this screen, you can launch millions of dollars worth of explosive hardware without breaking into a cold sweat. Each weapon system has its own panel, complete with four buttons: safe, arm, lock and fire. At the bottom of the screen is a simpler version of the Area of Operations map which displays contacts in the immediate vicinity.

Firing a weapon is fairly straightforward. Before you can fire any weapons, you must first alert your crew to go to battle stations. This is called 'General Quarters' and, once selected, a klaxon sounds, followed by a nice piece of digitised speech. Once your crew is ready to go into battle, you must 'hook' a target by clicking on its symbol displayed on the map. Then, depending on the type of target, select the desired weapon and move it from 'safe' to 'arm'. It's then just a matter of clicking on the 'lock' button and then on 'fire'. Providing the target is in range of the weapon, you are shown a short video clip of the weapon firing, accompanied by some sampled effects.

Once you've familiarised yourself with the intricacies of the game, you can progress to a full-blown campaign. Comprising of a sequence of related missions, these mega-battles are a test of your dexterity and composure under battle conditions. Some of the campaigns, such as the Falklands scenario, have extra forces present that weren't in the real conflict. No one said this was supposed to be a historical simulation, after all.

Don't assume for one second that this is a game that can be mastered in a few minutes. Many long hours of gameplay will be needed to fully understand the game and to read the novel-sized manual. Hardened strategists will dearly love this simulation, but if you don't like the idea of getting your hands dirty and prefer a cushioned ride in a game, go for something like *Seawolf* instead. Still, in a sea (no pun intended) of battle simulations, this game's beacon is shining just as brightly as all the others.

• DINO BONI

FULL POWER

Aegis - Guardian of the Fleet

Publisher: Time Warner Interactive

Contact: 0604-790-785

Developer: Software Sorcery

Price: £49.99

REQUIREMENTS

386DX2 or above; CD-ROM drive; MSCDEX 2.21 or above; VGA; 4Mb RAM; 20Mb HD space; MS DOS 5.0 or above; Microsoft compatible mouse. Supports: All major sound cards.

PUBLISHER'S SAY

Aegis is an exciting combination of technology and naval power. Prepare to patrol the world's oceans, defending yourself against hostile forces with a range of deadly surface-to-air, surface-to-surface and underwater weapons.

PC POWER'S SAY

Technology is all very well, but when it isn't used, as the CD-ROM isn't in this game, then it's all a bit of a waste of time. The game is exciting, but is also very slow in places. Defending yourself is going to be tough.

BREAKDOWN

Graphics

+ SVGA graphics are superb. Smooth video clips add to the atmosphere.

Sound

+ Great digitised speech and FX when firing weapons.
- Few FX in the rest of the game.

Playability

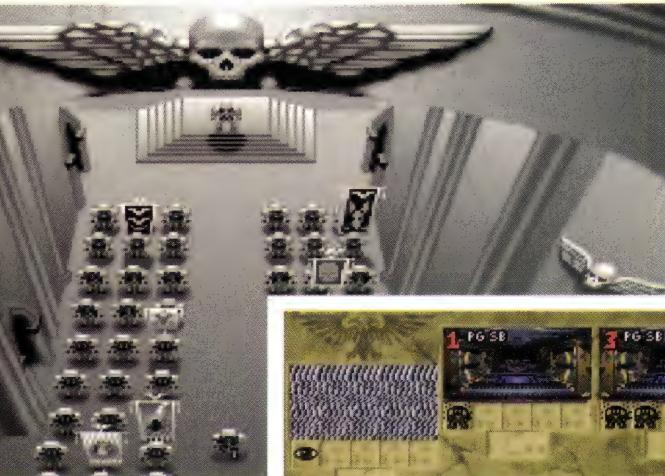
+ Very realistic in all respects.
- May be too complex for some inexperienced or younger players.

SUMMARY

Remarkably complex, difficult to master but enormous fun once you get your brain around it. It's a shame, however, that the CD-ROM technology wasn't used to its full potential.

eighty percent

Space Hulk



Above: This isn't a mistake, this sequence is in black and white but nobody knows why.



Above: The squad have their orders – follow the red arrows.



Below: The blood and guts are the remains of Genestealers foolish enough to get in my way.



The codex shows that was once a beautiful planet



Left and Far Left: At the start of each mission comes a detailed briefing from the commander.

When *Space Hulk* was released on floppy disk in 1993, it received rave reviews which were fully deserved. *Space Hulk* had managed to combine the best elements of a tactical strategy game along with superb graphics, a slick interface and some top class shoot'em-up action.

Space Hulk is based on a highly complex board/role play game much beloved by students in the early '90s and I have been reliably informed that it holds true to the spirit of the original game. The scenario runs as follows: thousands of years into the future, Terminators – the elite fighting force of the Imperium – have been scouring the galaxy, eradicating alien life forms that threaten human existence. Fans of 2000AD and Nemesis the Warlock might be feeling a slight case of déjà-vu at this point.

Genestealers

More recently in human history, space hulks have been appearing through space warps close to planets occupied by humans. These hulks were derelict spaceships from hundreds of years before. They are highly unstable and approaching the point of collapse, but even worse, they are infested with Genestealers, alien monstrosities that infect humans with their genes gradually transforming them into more Genestealers (hmm, sounds a bit Ridley Scott-ish to me).

The war between the Terminators and the Genestealers has taken on religious proportions

K



with the Terminators shouting holy slogans on their way into battle. (Be pure! Behave! perhaps.) The Terminators are heavily armoured and heavily armed. They need to be. Genestealers can rip open steel bulkheads with their claws and they are impervious to lightweight ammunition.

Okay, so how does the game work? First, the player is given a mission briefing. The first half is semi-religious cant ("Brother Marines, it is our holy duty..." and so on). This can be skipped. The second half outlines the objectives of the mission and close attention should be paid. The next moment, you are in a space hulk with up to ten marines under your control and a deadly mission to complete.

The interface demands a fair amount of practise, but once it is understood it is easy to use. To this end, there are a selection of training missions to get you going – the first consists of moving one marine through a few corridors to an exit point with no bad guys around. These basic tutorial missions get progressively harder until you are capable of handling a squad of five marines. After the tutorial there are ten more practise missions covering the types of scenarios you can expect to encounter later in the game.

"The nine new missions are stinkers. They are devious, nasty and full of twists. There are just not enough of them."

Two screens are used for controlling the squads of Terminators – the Planning Screen and the Terminator View Screen. These can be toggled just by clicking the right mouse button. The View Screen gives you the first person perspective of up to five Terminators – clicking an icon will bring up the display for the second squad if necessary. From this screen, Terminators can be moved individually and the player can see who's being attacked. The larger of the five views is the Terminator under your direct control, the others are in Overwatch which means they will fire automatically on any hostiles in line of sight. A right mouse click will enable you to take control over any of the other four at any time.

The planning screen is where the hard work takes place. This is an overview of the maze and it makes it possible to give each Terminator precise commands to carry out. The operation is quite simple: click on the Terminator to select him, then click on the location on the map where you want him to go, click on 'Go' and off he'll

trundle. Additional commands include opening and closing doors, firing weapons at specific targets and turning left or right. A command given to one Terminator can be duplicated to as many of the others as you want – useful for when you need to move several to the same location. Once the squad are moving, pop back to the view screen, take control of the lead Terminator and waste those disgusting alien wierdos.

The game is in three sections, the tutorial/training missions, Space Hulk Originals – trick one-off missions and the Deathwing Campaign. The latter is the whole point of *Space Hulk*, a continuous series of missions that have to be fought in sequence. Deathwing is seriously hard work, but it's well worth the effort.

Nothing new

All of this phenomenal gameplay was available with the floppy version, so what's different about the CD? Disappointingly, not a lot. The original already had good music and sound effects plus digitised speech, the usual things that are added to a CD. So, as it already included these, there wasn't much else they could do. They have tarted up the animated sequences between the games and these are very pretty, but they don't really add any new dimensions to the game. The best they could manage was to add nine new missions.

The nine new missions are stinkers. Anyone who has played *Space Hulk* all the way through will love them, they are devious, nasty and full of twists, but there's just not enough of them. Personally, I would have been a lot happier if they had not bothered with the new animations and added another twenty missions instead – or even better, a new campaign. I also experienced a fair degree of frustration with the loading time between missions. Even with a good twin-speed CD-ROM drive, it seemed to take forever.

If you already have *Space Hulk* on floppy, there is little, or no, incentive to buy the CD. If you missed the floppy release of *Space Hulk* and have a CD-ROM drive, then buy it immediately. Despite my initial disappointment at the (limited) extent of the enhancements, this is still one of the best games you can buy.

GED START



From the planning screen I can see my squad under attack – positioning is all important.

FULL POWER

Space Hulk CD
Publisher: Electronic Arts
Contact: 0753-549-442
Developer: Games Workshop
Price: £44.99

REQUIREMENTS

CD-ROM drive (486 SX 25MHz
(486 DX2 66MHz recommended);
4Mb RAM (8Mb recommended)
Supports: SoundBlaster 16;
Roland.

PUBLISHER'S SAY

Hot on the heels of the success of *Space Hulk* comes the CD-ROM version featuring all the playability of the original plus nine brand new brain bending missions, full speech and sound FX throughout.

PC POWER'S SAY

Still one of the best games ever, but there are only minor improvements in the CD version with nine new missions and some enhanced animated sequences. Worth having, though, if you haven't got the floppy version.

BREAKDOWN

Graphics

+ Clear well defined graphics with some excellent animations.

Sound

+ Atmospheric digitised voices and spooky soundtrack.
- Some commands are very repetitive.

Playability

+ It's brilliant, atmospheric and addictive.
- Mastering the control system does take time.

SUMMARY

When can I get hold of a copy of *Space Hulk II*? A superb, atmospheric game that will require much thought and strategic planning. If you haven't got the floppy version, get this.

ninety percent



Summer/Winter Challenge

Dino Boni teaches you to wreck your joystick in one easy lesson with two past-master sports sims from Accolade.

Way back in the mid-eighties, a company called Epyx released a game for the Commodore 64 called *Summer Games*. Together with up to three friends, you competed in a series of events taken from the Olympics, each player trying to win the coveted gold medal.

It was an instant success, and a whole range of knock-on games were released on various home computer formats throughout the next few years. The PC was once of the last computers to add an Olympic sports sim to its repertoire, with Accolade's *Summer Challenge*. PC owners snapped it up and it was promptly followed by *Winter Games*. This followed the same idea, but was set, obviously, in the Winter Olympics.

These games are a few years old now, but still immensely enjoyable. Knowing this, Accolade have re-released them together on one CD. Both games are playable directly from the CD, but there is also an install option that will allow you to copy the games onto your hard drive.

Summer Games (the oldest of the two) has eight events, ranging from archery to pole vaulting. *Winter Games*, likewise, has eight events, set in more wintery climes. Most of the events in both games require a fairly large

amount of fire-button bashing, but if your joystick has independent auto-fire switches, you'll be able to breeze through most of the events without breaking into a sweat yourself.

There are two main sections to each game; Training and Tournament modes. The Training mode allows you to have unlimited attempts at an event, with each score being recorded so you can see if your performance is improving. Quite a few of the events require a lot of practise before you'll become proficient enough to play the next section of the game.

Chipmunk challenge

Up to four human players can play in the Tournament mode. Each player takes it in turns to play each event, but unfortunately, there is no head-to-head option. At the end of each event, the medals are awarded and you can then either save the standings, or continue the game.

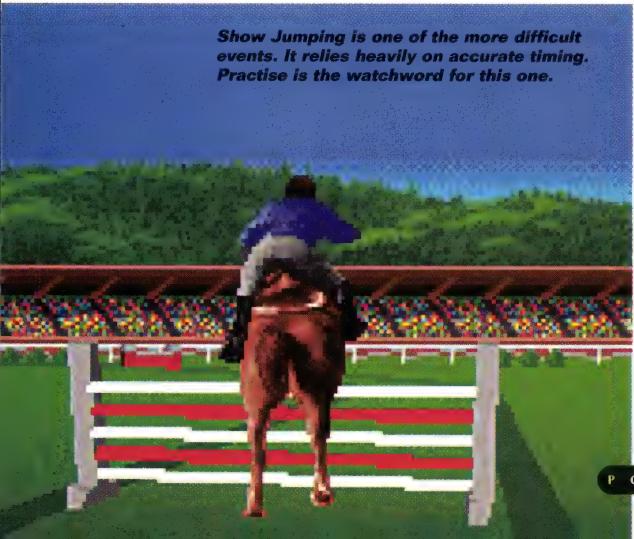
The graphics aren't quite what we're used to now, but they are still fairly good. The detail level in the background is fairly average, but after you've played the game for a while, you begin to realise how far software developers have come as far as PC graphics are concerned.

Sound effects are prominent right throughout the game and they're all rather good. There is an occasional tendency for the samples to be played at the wrong speed, making the speech sound like it was sampled from the Chipmunks.

Both games were good in their heyday, and received very good scores in a few magazines. Both have weathered the onslaught of the years well, with only the graphics showing their age and, at £19.99 for two games, they aren't going to lighten your wallet by any substantial amount.

If you enjoy joystick-wrecking sports sims, and feel like taking a trip back in time, then you can't go far wrong with this compendium. The variety of sports included should keep you interested in these games for some time. Just don't expect too much in the way of state-of-the-art graphics, then you won't be disappointed.

Show Jumping is one of the more difficult events. It relies heavily on accurate timing. Practise is the watchword for this one.



● DINO BONI

FULL POWER

Summer/Winter Challenge

Publisher: Accolade

Contact: 081-877-0880

Developer: Mindscape

Price: £19.99

REQUIREMENTS

286; 10MHz AT or above; VGA;

640K RAM;

CD-ROM drive; joystick; mouse.

Supports: All major sound cards.

BREAKDOWN

Graphics

- + Presentable graphics.
- Nowhere near today's 256-colours.

Sound

- + Decent FX and speech.
- Some machines play speech too fast.

Playability

- + You'll constantly be trying to better your last score.

SUMMARY

Both games look their age, but underneath they're still fun. Maybe it's time someone released an updated version. I hope Accolade's listening.

seventy-two percent

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BOXFORM

European Champions



Above: Waiting for kick-off. Spot the ball.



Above: Team editing screen. Below: Match editing screen.



Below: The start of the season. The league can be edited.



Ole, Ole, Ole, Ole. Kirsten Foster shakes off the 'we woz robbed' chip on her shoulder and tries to forget her World Cup sorrows by playing *European Champions*.

Games publishers will be battling it out this summer over the potential market created by World Cup fever. Prepare for the flood of football games that will emerge blinking from the tunnel of development by checking up on their form in PC Power. One of the first of these silicon celebrations of God's own sport is Ocean's *European Champions*.

Football games are not exactly a thriving species on the PC, and good footy games rival pandas for rarity. (I mean, how many times have you seen a panda playing football on your PC?) *Sensi Soccer* and *Striker* made valiant attempts to recreate that Saturday afternoon feel, but they both lacked that certain magic which sparkles over soccer games on other machines. Maybe, with this influx of new blood, the time has finally come for a decent football sim on the PC. But, from the looks of *European Champions*, we might have to wait just a little longer.

European Champions carries all the usual baggage associated with your average footy game. You've got loads of options, all of which seem to have little real effect on the game. I mean, if football was as easy as tweaking a few variables, then even a turnip would be over-qualified for the England Manager's job. (Who said it is already?)

You can choose which team you play out of any of the premier teams from France, Italy, Spain, Germany or England and whether you want to play a friendly, league or tournament match. You can edit the teams to your liking, changing players' names and positions, and increasing or reducing each player's fitness, speed, tackling and agility. This enables you to give yourself super-sonic Giggsy-type dream players and lumber your opponents with a load of complete donkeys. If one of your donkeys tires, there is a substitution option to let you replace him during the match. You can also alter the level of intelligence and quality of response of the computer team, on a scale of 1 to 10. There is also an option to make all teams equal for all you fair-minded souls out there.

No soccer game would be complete without the tactics editor and *European Champions* doesn't disappoint, with yet more baffling choices to be made. You can change individual player positions for a number of set-piece situations e.g. Kick Off, Goal Kick and Corners.



There's also an option to set players' positions in a certain zone, just to really confuse you.

You can choose between a number of options which effect conditions of play. Amusingly, you can choose between lenient, average and strict referees, depending upon how dirty you want to play. You can select pitch conditions: normal, hard, muddy, wet and the controversial astro-turf. Basically, this alters the speed of play. Wind conditions can also be changed, to alter the predictability of the ball's movements. Finally, the length of a match can be adjusted to make it from four to ninety minutes long.

Poor control

You can play a variety of games. If you need to practise your passing and ball control (and you will) you can select the practise option which will pitch your team against a lone goalie. If you choose to play a cup competition you can edit the format, choosing the number of teams in the competition, the number of matches in a round, the points system and whether to have replays or penalty shoot-outs. You can also edit leagues in the same way.

If you want to get straight into the football, choose a friendly match, then you just have to pick two teams, decide which you will control and it's "Ref. - blow that shiny whistle."

You can use the keyboard or a joystick to control all the players on your side, except for the goalie. You only control one or two players at a time. When your player has the ball he has an arrow above his head showing where he should pass to. If he doesn't have the ball he is highlighted by his number displayed over his head. A player who will receive a pass has a halo(!) over his head.



Above: Ooh, foul, Ref! Tentoni takes a dive. That will mean a free kick. You can take it yourself, or, if you're shaken by the unprovoked attack from the opposition, you can let the computer take it for you.
Below left: The main menu. The bright, user-friendly icons are pretty self-explanatory.



There are a lot of moves available to your players. If the player under your control is not in possession, he can perform a sliding tackle, or perform a header or volley when receiving. If you are in possession you can dribble (obviously), kick forward, ping-pass, point to pass, or shoot. A ping-pass automatically sends the ball to a selected receiver. Point to pass means you can select a receiver yourself. You can also alter the strength and height of a kick.

The best move is auto-shoot. If you press the fire button in the middle of a pass, the receiver will automatically shoot at goal if he's in the right position. These moves are pretty easy to master and use in a game. But overall, gameplay is let down. This is because the matches end up being a matter of possession. Control just isn't tight enough. It's not unusual for the ball to sit on the field while the players run frantically around it. Too often the computer makes your decisions for you and you're just left to decide on the timing. The poor graphics don't make your job any easier, either.

During the game, you can view the action from overhead or to the side. The overhead view is probably the easiest to manage, although at times, this makes the players look like they're crawling and pushing the ball with their hands. You only get to see a really small area of the pitch during play, but there is a radar overview showing the position of the ball and players at all times. The screen also shows the time passed and the current score and there's even a written commentary which pops up along the bottom of the screen telling you who's in possession (9 times out of 10 this is Ryan Giggs) who's been fouled, who's taking a free kick and so on.

The graphics are pretty basic. The players are

very bitty and the ball is a smudge which is often impossible to find. There's no peripheral decoration here. The pitch is basically green with some shading which differs according to the pitch conditions (a bit of brown for muddy, some bright green for astro turf etc). You never see beyond the pitch, so you don't get to see any spectators. The icons in the options screens are clear and colourful and make these screens easy enough to use, but there's nothing in the way of visual delights here.

Ping-pong

Sound leaves a lot to be desired too. The soundtrack is an annoyingly catchy number, the sort of tune played by kids in bands in American sit-coms. Effects are also irritating. The game's producers have helpfully included a 'ping' noise to tell you that there's a player free to pass to. The problem is that different players are being selected as receivers almost every second which means the ping becomes almost a secondary soundtrack. Thankfully there is a 'no sound' option in set-up to relieve the agony.

Overall this is an OK football game which benefits from the current lack of competition. It might be appealing to someone who likes to take it easy. The first skill level is a dream if you want to boost your self-esteem or take your favourite team to the top of European football. Your opponents literally wait for you to tackle them. But if you're serious about your soccer on the PC, I'd save your money for what hopefully will be the arrival of a barrage of quality football games this summer.

• KIRSTEN FOSTER

FULL POWER

European Champions
 Publisher: Ocean
 Contact: 061-832-6633
 Developer: Denton Design/Audiogenic
 Price: £29.99

REQUIREMENTS

386 or above; 25MHz; VGA; 256K RAM;
 588K base memory; 816K EMS;
 keyboard; joystick.
 Supports: Soundblaster; Adlib; Roland
 LAPC 1 and compatibles.

PUBLISHER'S SAY

Variety is the name of the game with *European Champions* – 10 skill levels, 2 passing styles, 5 different pitches and oodles of authenticity and arcade-action make this one of the best football games on the PC.

PC POWER'S SAY

There are a good number of options but I suspect they have little effect on play. This game definitely appeals because of its arcade-action rather than strategic element. It's not the best but nor is it the worst footy game around.

BREAKDOWN

Graphics

– Very unclear and uninteresting. The ball often disappears completely.

Sound

+ It's a nice idea to use sound signals as part of gameplay...
 – but the effects and the music are just too irritating and beepy.

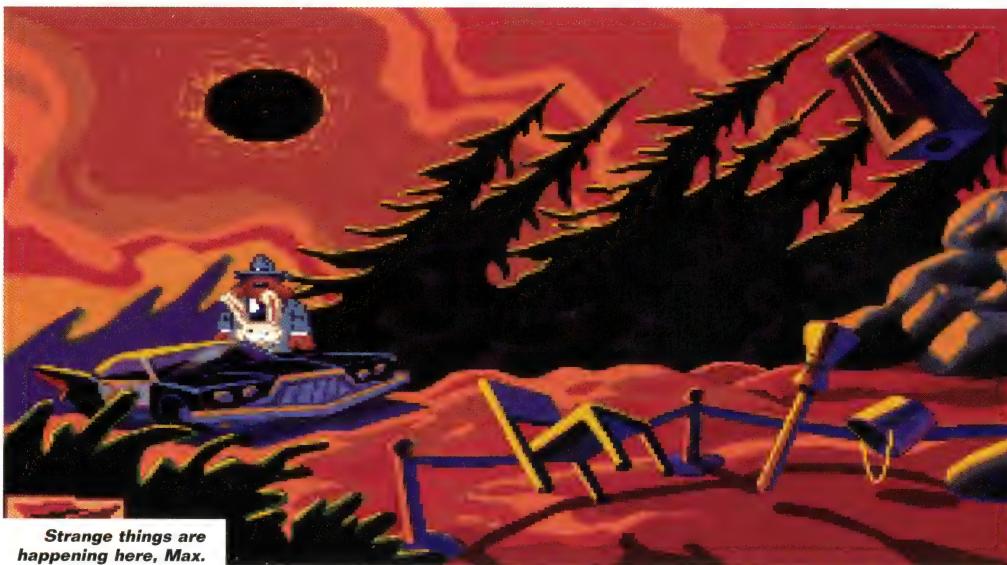
Playability

+ A good range of editing options.
 – The control mechanism is just too poor to put up with for long.

SUMMARY

This is not a disastrous game but it does nothing for the cause of football on the PC. This might be a game younger kids would enjoy, but serious soccer game fans will find it wanting.

sixty-nine percent



Top: The world's largest ball of twine has, for some strange reason, a fish restaurant on top of it!
Bottom: Inside the world's largest ball of twine.

Sam & Max Hit the Road

Sam & Max Hit the Road, was an eagerly awaited stable-mate of LucasArts' Day of the Tentacle. Now the CD version is upon us, boasting that it is a full 'talkie'. Dino Boni listens in on the funniest adventure game ever.

LucasArts have a strange sense of humour, but an extremely funny one. *Sam & Max* was snapped up in its thousands when it appeared as a hard disk game and for months afterwards people were waiting with bated breath for the CD version. After the success of the 'talkie' version of *Day of the Tentacle*, it is a little disappointing that we've had to wait so long for this. The wait has been worth it though, by god it has. Yes, this is a game worth blaspheming for.

The game is essentially the same; the plot is still the same, the puzzles are still the same, but instead of the characters talking to you via text on the screen, the CD version boasts around 6,000 lines of spoken dialogue, all poised ready to beat your ears into submission and your face into a silly grin. If you've never heard of the game (where have you been? Alpha Centauri?), Sam and Max are two freelance detectives who are called upon

only when a case becomes too bizarre for the normal cops to handle. They also happen to be a dog and a naked rabbit. Sam is characterised with a Brooklyn accent, while Max has a small, nasal voice that hides his true nature. This cute, fluffy bunny has a profound affection for physical violence which comes as a bit of a shock if you haven't played the floppy version before.

Using their own unique brand of questioning and violence, Sam and Max have to find a run-

away carnival Bigfoot who's decided that show business is no life for a seven foot tall, hairy beast. In their travels, Sam and Max have to cross the length and breadth of the United States, picking up clues as they go along, interacting with other characters and using objects found along the route. The puzzles within the game are quite difficult, but if you get stuck, the supplied hint manual will see you through the more taxing parts of the adventure.

The game varies from the normal, run of the mill graphic adventure. Everything is geared towards comic appeal, even more so than in *The Day of the Tentacle*. Many of the scenes in the game will have you rolling around with laughter, even if the humour is very American.

Apart from the digitised (and I'll say again, very funny) speech the game is still the same, and anyone who's completed the floppy version will wonder what the fuss is all about. For some strange reason, the game even has an option to turn off the speech and revert back to text-based play.

The animation of the characters is still second to none, and some of the backgrounds are worthy of a Hanna-Barbera cartoon, which in essence, is what this game has become. All of the graphics have been drawn with acute attention to detail, with many visual gags to back up the verbal humour.

If you've already got this game on floppy, then it is hardly worth dipping into your wallet to buy the CD 'talkie' version. On the other hand, if you are one of the many people who still haven't played this fantastic adventure, go out and get it. You'll laugh so hard, your neighbours will complain.

● DINO BONI



FULL POWER

Sam & Max Hit the Road CD
Publisher: US Gold
Contact: 021-625-3388
Developer: LucasArts
Price: £49.99

REQUIREMENTS

386SX-33 or above; 4Mb RAM; CD-ROM;
MSCDEX2.1 or above; VGA; keyboard.
Supports: All major sound cards;
joystick; mouse.

BREAKDOWN

Graphics

+ Great animation sequences and superbly detailed backgrounds.

Sound

+ Clear, funny and well timed speech.
Spot FX are in abundance for once.

Playability

+ Instantly playable. Will keep you playing right up to bedtime.

SUMMARY

If you haven't got this game on floppy and you have a CD-ROM drive and you love a good laugh, then get this now. It's almost worth buying a drive for.

eighty-three percent

INTERACTIVE ADULT

18

RANGE



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Corridor 7

Wolfenstein 3-D with whistles and bells on? Corridor 7 is the new-born baby of the first-person perspective family.

Earth is now at peace with itself. Nations that previously spent billions of dollars on weapons and defence are now channelling that money into space exploration. In 2012, Dr. Donald Fox, a prominent exobiologist on one of the first manned missions to Mars, returned with a curious metallic object.

Taken from one of the face-like formations on Mars, this object was the first proof of intelligent life on other planets. Scientists were elated, but the government was cautious and sent the object to an underground research lab called Delta Base. The object was taken to the lowest level of the base, known as Corridor 7.

As the team of scientists started to run tests on the object, one thing became clear: it was very, very old. During a series of gamma radiation tests, the object started to change. After a while, it exploded in a ball of lightning, destroying most of the lab in Corridor 7.

The base was put on alert, just as something emerged from the lightning sphere. Humanoid in form, this alien was carrying what could only be a weapon in its arms. Many more followed, and

promptly wiped out the base personnel and took over the entire complex. They installed a shield around the base, allowing them time to establish themselves before taking over the planet.

This is where you come into the story. You're a tough, Special Forces marine that has been sent to Delta Base to destroy the object located on the last level. First, you have to destroy all the aliens you will come across on your journey down through the higher levels of the lab.

Some of the doors in the complex require a clearance code to unlock them. The only way to get this is to find the relevant computer (built into the walls) and de-activate the security programs. As well as computers, the walls also hold med-kits (to restore your health) and ammo dispensers. Other objects can be found on the floor in certain parts of each level, but you'll have to look hard for them.

Small and speedy

Corridor 7 uses an improved version of the *Wolfenstein 3-D* engine. The graphics, therefore, are not up to the standard of *Doom*, but are very smooth and some of the detail on the walls is very impressive.

The speed that the game runs at depends very much on the speed of your machine. If you have a slow machine, then the size of the display window can be adjusted, promoting fast screen-updating, but be prepared for a bit of eyestrain!

This game is, eventually, very good and at this price it's extremely good value for money. The only problem is that it gets a bit tedious at times. The aliens are very sparse for the first few levels and, since you only have one life to complete the whole game, frequent saving is required.

If there were more aliens on your back, and the weapons were more thrilling, powerful and accessible, this game would give full-price commercial games a real run for their money. As it stands, however, the tedium of the first few levels may be enough to put you off playing *Corridor 7* forever.



Above: Computers give you clearance to go through certain doors. If you don't find the right computer for the right door, you won't be able to open it.

● DINO BONI

FULL POWER

Corridor 7
Publisher: Gametek
Contact: 0753-553-445
Developer: IntraCorp
Price: £19.99

REQUIREMENTS

386SX or above; 2Mb RAM;
hard disk; VGA;
joystick; mouse.
Supports: Adlib, Soundblaster.

BREAKDOWN

Graphics

- + Great improvement on *Wolf 3-D*.
- The 3-D perspective is confusing.

Sound

- Very little in the way of FX.

Playability

- + Instantly playable and not too difficult.
- Experienced players will be bored.

SUMMARY

Corridor 7 is billed as an improved version of *Wolfenstein 3-D*, but the only improvement is in the graphics. A good buy for the price, though.

seventy percent

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Budget reviews

International Soccer
Zeppelin Platinum
£14.99

Sensi Soccer, Kick Off – these are great football games. This one isn't. *International Soccer* tries to recapture the depth, playability and sheer mass appeal of these games, and fails dismally. You can either play a friendly match or go for a shot at the cup, but no matter which one you choose, you'll be resetting your machine within the minute. The sprites are appalling and even on a 486DX2-66 they are slow, jerky and uncontrollable. The only saving grace with this game is the large amount of teams that you can choose from. The only difference between them seems to be the colour of their strips, as all the players are just as bad as each other. The game can be controlled with either the keyboard or a joystick, but for some strange reason you still have to use the keyboard when



selecting options. No wonder this game was released on budget.

You can choose to set up your team's tactics to suit your playing style and even select various players, but this is all in vain. The game is slow, boring and unplayable. Save your money for one of the other budget games this month or leave it in the bank to accumulate some paltry interest.

Score: 20%

Sleepwalker
Hit Squad
£9.99

Sleepwalker is a platform game with a slight puzzle edge mixed in.

You play the part of Ralph, a faithful hound and loving pet to Lee. Lee is a young lad with a tendency to sleepwalk. Nothing unusual in that, since we all do it at some time or other, but tonight, Lee has decided to venture out of the confines and relative safety of his bedroom and into the perilous streets of the city.

While everyone sleeps, Lee is in mortal danger and you (Ralph) are the only person who can save him. Ralph can push, kick and generally direct Lee where he wants to go, to keep him out of danger and lead him back to his bedroom window. Many dangerous foes await our poor victim and if too many of them attack Lee, he will wake up and promptly die. (Didn't you know that you're not supposed to wake sleepwalkers up? Now you know why.) Ralph must also protect himself from the same unruly bunch or there will be no one to

protect Lee. Distressing, isn't it?

The platform element of this game is fairly understated. Most of the emphasis is on strategy and puzzle-solving. Ralph's main ability is to kick Lee onto higher platforms, but he can also push him along or stop him from walking altogether. Ralph's last helpful ability is the canine bridge. If you make him fall down a gap small enough, he will form a bridge with his arms and shoulders that Lee can walk across. I wish I had a dog that could do that. (Really? How strange! – ed.)

The graphics in *Sleepwalker* are large and colourful – just how they should be for a decent platformer. Some of Ralph's expressions and antics will have you laughing out loud, but the actual game is a little difficult. The control method is awkward and unresponsive sometimes and leads to Lee's death on more than one occasion. Apart from this quibble, *Sleepwalker* is a

decent enough game that is worth the smallish asking price, especially if you are a fan of platform games.

Score: 80%

Quest & Fun
Ubi Soft
£29.99

CD-ROM is the ideal format for compilations. With 625 Megabytes to spare, you can fit a lot of floppy games onto just one CD. Ubi Soft's latest release combines *King's Quest V*, *Leisure Suit Larry 5* and *Red Baron* onto one CD. Each game is playable from the CD, so no awkward hard disk installation with this compendium.

In *King's Quest V*, you must help King Graham search for his missing family and castle in this classic graphic adventure. Each location is pictured with superb 256 colour graphics and the point-and-click interface makes playing a doddle. The game is starting to show its age a little, but many people will still enjoy this challenging and formidable adventure game.

Leisure Suit Larry 5 follows its predecessors' humour and blatant sexual clichés. The game sees you



Battles of Time


Ubi Soft
£29.99

et another CD-ROM compilation from Ubi Soft. The games included in this compilation all have an element of strategy associated with them which makes the pack ideal for all of the armchair generals out there.

The first game, *The Perfect General*, is a battle game using conventional warfare weapons. You must strive to become the 'perfect general' as you work your way up through the ranks and confront some of the best generals of all time as your enemies. The graphics are very simple, but with this type of game that shouldn't be seen as a drawback. The gameplay is what counts in war games, and *The Perfect General* has plenty of this to go around. One or two players can fight over varied terrain in a battle to the death, but it's the computer controlled opponents that will present you with the real challenge.

Mega Lo Mania is the best game on this compilation by far. This is a strategy game with a little bit of arcade playability. You are a demi-god who enjoys playing war games, not with boards and pieces – with real people! You control your pawns' actions and try to capture control of islands in your realm, competing against three other players. Your people start out as primitive barbarians, but through the development of more and more technological weapons, you increase your strangle-hold on the islands.

The graphics and sound in *Mega Lo Mania* are both superb and some of the digitised speech is very funny. This game is the creme de la creme of this compilation and well worth investigating.

Battle Isle is a one- or two-player war game that is more of an arcade, rather than a strategy game. You can either play against the computer or against a friend on a split screen, fighting it out for control of various islands. Each player starts with the same forces and it's up to them how they use them. Speed is of the essence in this game, together with a large helping of common sense. The strategic ability needed to play this game is the lowest of all the games in this compilation, and the computer opponents aren't too difficult to beat. What does make the game worth playing however, is the two-player, split-screen option that can make evenings and weekends disappear altogether.

The last game on this tremendous CD-ROM compilation is *First Samurai*, reviewed elsewhere on these hallowed pages, so no more needs to be said about this very disappointing game. The other three games on the CD steal the show and leave *First Samurai* bringing up the rear and it's for these three titles that you'll buy this outstandingly good value CD compilation.

Score: 80%





taking control of Larry, a white-suited medallion man who can still woo the girls with his thick, polished charm. *LSL5* is very tongue in cheek and may not be so suitable for younger players, as some of the sexual antics of Larry could provoke a few embarrassing questions from them. If you have been playing the *Larry* games since their release quite a few years ago and relish the thought of fiendishly complex puzzles, muscle-straining laughter and a few scantly clad females, go ahead and play it to your heart's content. Be warned however, some people may find it offensive and *Leisure Suit Larry 5* isn't a game for young children.

After a few hours of



adventuring, it was nice to see a decent flight-sim included in the compilation. *Red Baron* puts you in the pilot's seat of various vintage aircraft just after the outbreak of World War I. You can select a number of different missions, or practise dog-fighting a famous Ace. Practise is definitely recommended for this game, especially if you are used to piloting a MiG-29. The graphics are just plain filled vectors, but because this game was written to achieve optimum performance on a high-ish 386, it is wonderfully smooth on anything up to a 486DX2-66.

Each game in this compilation would be worth the money if sold on its own, but since Ubi Soft have been so nice and placed them all on one CD, *Quest & Fun* is tremendous value for money.

Score: 85%

First Samurai Collectors £9.99

Amiga platform games are slowly migrating onto the PC, most of them via budget labels. Platformers are one area of the PC games market that is lacking, to say the least, simply because your average PC isn't too adept at moving large chunks of graphics around the screen smoothly.

This game's story-line starts in

ancient Japan. You are a student of the martial arts, progressing towards mastery of your spirit as well as your body, when your teacher is murdered by an evil demon. The demon escapes through a time-warp to the future, and you follow him, seeking revenge for your master's death.

Not only did your master teach you physical combat, but he also taught you some rudimentary magic. At certain times during the game, an object or obstacle may seem impossible to pass, but all you have to do is pray and, if your prayer is answered, the solution will present itself.

Considering the machine's limitations, *First Samurai* is rather nice to look at. The graphics are more or less direct ports from its parent Amiga version and are large, colourful and detailed. It's when you start to play the game that the problems arise.

The control system for *First Samurai* is appalling. The keyboard controls are unresponsive in the extreme,

making control of the main character utterly impossible. The joystick control is no better, and you feel as if you are in control of a wayward freight train with no chance of stopping it.

The cataclysmic effect this has on *First Samurai* is appalling to see. This could've been a fantastic platform; it has just the right mix of arcade action and puzzles that should've produced a great game. Maybe it just wasn't meant to be.

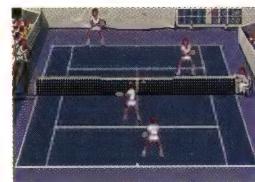
Score: 42%

Jimmy Connors' Great Courts 2 Collectors

£9.99

Sports sims are not too abundant on the PC. The only sport that is heavily supported is golf, but who wants to hit a little white ball around a field, trying to get it into a 4 inch hole?

Great Courts 2 is more my sort of game. Tennis is about skill, speed, stamina and co-ordination. On a computer game, the requirements may change a little



bit and a lot of luck might come into play, but this is one sport that many people would love to play for real, but are not inclined to learn. What an ideal scenario for a computer game.

Great Courts 2 has three main modes of play; Practise Match, Practise Mode and Tour Mode. The Practise Match lets you play a single set match against either the computer or a friend, whereas the Practise Mode allows you to set up an automatic ball dispenser to fire shots at you. You can set it up to play only one kind of shot (e.g. a lob if you want to practise your smash return) or it can be completely random.

The Tour Mode is the main part of the game. You create a player by allocating a predetermined number of points to each of his abilities. The more points you give, the better your player will be at that particular part of the game. Once this is accomplished, you then have to select which tournaments you will play in, and whether to play in the singles match or in the doubles.

The game itself is quite easy to pick up. To serve the ball, you have to press the fire button down

(or the space bar on the keyboard) and keep it held down. A small circle will then appear on the court's surface, indicating where the ball will go. You have to steer this circle into the appropriate area and release the fire button to make your serve – not an easy task by any means.

Returning a shot is as simple as pressing the fire button. The computer picks the best shot available and plays it accordingly, which is just as well. You don't want to have to think about which shot to play when the ball hurtles towards you.

The graphics within *Great Courts 2* are very good and the sprites move smoothly. The background of the tennis court is sadly lacking any animation, and a cheering crowd when you play a good shot would do wonders for the atmosphere. The sound within the game is practically non-existent, save for a few beeps and the odd tune. While this is an annoying part of many games, the gameplay in *Great Courts 2* is so good, you'll hardly ever notice.

Now then, where's that ball-boy with my Robinson's?

Score: 88%



BUDGET CHARTS

Rank	Platform	Game	Distributor	Price
1	(NE)	Sim City Classic	The Hit Squad	£16.99
2	(NE)	Jimmy White's Snooker	The Hit Squad	£14.99
3	(I)	Monkey Island	Kixx XL	£16.99
4	(NE)	Doom	Titanium Seal	£4.99
5	(7)	Wing Commander	The Hit Squad	£14.99
6	(10)	Populous & Promised Lands	The Hit Squad	£14.99
7	(4)	Eye of the Beholder	Kixx XL	£16.99
8	(NE)	Police Quest 2	Kixx XL	£14.99
9	(8)	Links - The Challenge Of Golf	Kixx XL	£16.99
10	(NE)	Doom	Micro Star	£6.99
11	(6)	Another World	Kixx XL	£14.99
12	(NE)	Fantastic Adventures of Dizzy	Code Masters	£14.99
13	(NE)	Crazy Cars 3	Fox Hits	£7.99
14	(9)	Police Quest 1	Kixx XL	£16.99
15	(3)	Winter Challenge	The Hit Squad	£12.99
16	(NE)	Lure of the Temptress	The Hit Squad	£14.99
17	(5)	Fun School 2: Under 6	The Hit Squad	£9.99
18	(20)	Leisure Suit Larry	Kixx XL	£14.99
19	(NE)	Magic Land Dizzy	Code Masters	£9.99
20	(12)	Fun School 2: 6-8 Years	Hit Squad	£9.99

O Last month's position



the Public eye

Once again, Dino Boni takes a stroll down the shareware road to see the sights of PD City.

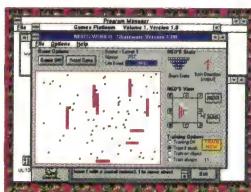
1 - Awful, 2 - Poor, 3 - Average, 4 - Good, 5 - Excellent

Games for Windows

Supplier: Platinum
Shareware
Disk Ref: Games for Windows CD

Shareware CD collections make good buying sense, if you have a CD-ROM drive, that is. For less than half the price of a full commercial game, you get a whole host of bundled software on one CD for you to use at your leisure. *Games for Windows* is a collection of, erm, games for Windows! The CD comes with its own nifty front end which is installed in its own program group when you run the set-up utility from the file manager, and makes installing and running the games a breeze.

Most of the games can be run direct from the CD, so you can look through them before choosing any that you would like on your hard drive. Text-based instruction files (normally called README.TXT) can also be read from the menu before installation.



so you can check to see if a game needs any special parameters in your Windows start-up files.

The games are split into six categories in the menu system, and although some games appear in more than one category, there are around 100 games provided. You don't have to stick to the pre-selected categories either. A 'Search' option is provided, so you can create a new list of games that match a specified keyword e.g. you could search for all the games that have the word 'poker' in the title or description, and call the new group 'Poker Games'.

The games themselves vary in quality, but most of them are pretty good. There are lots of different versions of arcade classics like *Missile Command*, but most of the games have original themes. You do occasionally come across the odd duffer; try *Get the Girl* in the 'Other Games' section if you really want a game that insults your intelligence.

Some of the better games take a little rooting out. One of the best is in the 'Board & Strategy' section. It's a Windows version of the classic tactical board game, *Risk*. Called simply *WinRisk*, the game completely duplicates the original board game, and can even allow the computer to play the other players for you, so you can either sit back and watch them fight it out between themselves, or join in with them.

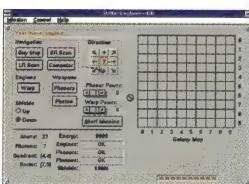
Games for Windows is well worth a look if you enjoy Windows games, but if you are interested in getting more for your money, then I'd suggest that you buy a shareware CD such as *Minerva V* (reviewed in issue 4) that has more or less everything that you could want for only a few pounds extra.

[3]

Jason Storm in Space Chase

Supplier: Springfield Publishing
Disk Ref: Space Chase

Shareware platform games are cropping up all over the place lately. Most shareware catalogues are full of games from various programmers and software houses offering jumping-related delights, and many of them give hours of cheap, pleasurable entertainment.



Blake Stone Aliens of Gold; version 2

Supplier: Transend Services Ltd
Disk Ref: 18000

Apogee and ID Software are in a terminal battle, one that could see the face of shareware gaming change for all eternity. After ID's *Doom*, Apogee tried to woo some of this fantastic game's followers with *Blake Stone*, a game based loosely on *Wolfenstein 3-D*. Set in the near future, you play the part of a real tough guy called, you've guessed it, Blake Stone. Blake is the result of cross-breeding Rambo with Einstein; a man with muscles in his brain as well as his body and he also takes on missions that even the SAS would refuse, mumbling excuses as they scuttled out of the door.

The world is in trouble. Dr Goldfire, a brilliant genetic engineer who has gone slightly mad, has vowed to take over the known galaxy (by this time, we have quite a few inhabited colonies on other worlds). Blake has been dispatched to the Star Institute, Goldfire's last known location. He must make his way through the 10 levels of the building to the top office, and confront Goldfire.

This isn't all there is to the game, however. The first mission in the Star Institute is the first episode of six complete missions, available separately from Transend. The shareware version of *Blake Stone* only includes this first episode, but what a game it is.

Essentially, this game is *Wolfenstein 3-D* with a lot of improvements. The original *Blake Stone* was seriously lacking in the sound department, but this has been rectified with the inclusion of a new range of spot effects and a splattering of sampled speech. I love the big, green mutant guard who shouts "You're gonna die!". The choice of weapons is slightly limited, but each of them packs a mean punch. If you were given a bit more choice, and maybe the odd missile weapon or two, shooting the mutants would have been even more fun.

The first-person perspective engine is very smooth, but the graphics don't include the massive amount of detail that *Doom* offers. The same can be said for the monsters. They are all very formidable opponents, but they don't make you gasp when you see them for the first time, as they do in *Doom*.

The only other, slight complaint I have about this game, is concerning the size of the levels. They're just way too short, and the puzzles that were evident in *Doom* are practically non-existent.

If you haven't already guessed, I'm a bit of a *Doom*-buff. I love the game, but until the sequel is released, then I'll be playing *Blake Stone*. While it has all the requirements to make it a hit, the asking price for the full version is a bit steep. You can buy the other episodes in stages, but this works out to be even more expensive. If you haven't seen *Blake Stone* yet, or were unimpressed with the first version, take a look at version two, and I think you'll be playing it until *Doom 2 - Hell on Earth* hits our shores later this year.

[4]



(just like me – ed). Some of them, however, never quite deliver the goods as per their descriptions. *Space Chase* sadly falls into this category. Billed as a game 'in the style of Apogee', this tempting little programme will surely make you gibber from the very moment you start the game. You play the infamous Jason Storm, a galactic hero and all-round nice guy. He was born on a small planet in Galaxy 239 and brought up on a small, sleepy farm.

Like most farm boys, he longed to see the universe, and the only way out of his dreary existence was to join the Galactic Military. So, enrolment papers in hand, he trotted down to the local enlistment office and signed up. After a short stint of basic training, he was assigned to one of the many galactic assault battalions. As the years went on, opportunities arose and Jason took them all. Ranger School, Airborne and Spaceborne Commando Training and even a short time in



Special Forces all hammered the fundamental purpose of a marine into Jason's skull; he was a killing machine. Jason became very good at his job...

Now Jason has been given what may be the toughest mission of his short, eventful life. A terrorist group calling themselves 'Evil Guys Inc.' have taken control of Capital City, home to the Galactic government. They plan to overthrow the current government and take control of the entire galaxy. It is up to Jason to capture the leaders of Evil Guys Inc., destroy their forces and end their reign of terror.

All sounds very impressive, doesn't it? Graphically, the game is appalling. In these days of 256 colour sprites and backgrounds, the 16 colour EGA-clone graphics look like they should be condemned to a museum. I know shareware programmers don't have the facilities that major software companies do, but even a 10 year old with the most basic of PC drawing packages could have done better.

The sound support is amusing to say the least. Adlib music is supported, but if you want to hear any kind of sound effects, then you'll have to put up with the screechy tones of your PC's internal speaker. If the programmer managed to pump some music through a sound card, why on earth couldn't he/she direct the spot effects to a sound card, too?

The entire game seems to have been developed as a programming exercise and released as an

afterthought. Why anyone would want to pay the registration fee for this invidious game is beyond me. Save your pennies for something else, and feel a better person for it.

[10]

Gateworld

Supplier: Invicta

Shareware

Disk Ref: Gateworld

As we draw the shareware reviews to a close for another month, I



must show you another example of the platform genre that has landed on my not so tidy desk.

Gateworld isn't too bad at all. The game opens with a tantalising little intro and then, after a brief encounter with an options screen, it's straight into the game. You are in a series of caves, deep underground on an alien planet and you've got to find a way out. The caves are fraught with danger and peril around every corner, so you must stay on your toes or be prepared to meet your maker. On the other hand, there are also some structures in the caves that will help you on your quest, such as see-saws that give you that extra 'oomph' when you want to jump onto a high platform.

The graphics in *Gateworld* aren't too bad at all, but they're not brilliant. Everything in the cave is drawn with at least a small amount of artistic flair and could even impress some of the more sheltered PC gamers out there.

Apart from this, *Gateworld* falls into the same spiked-pit as many PC platform games do. The PC simply isn't up to moving large chunks of graphics around the screen unless you are a very clever PC programmer, and whoever wrote *Gateworld* has tried their best, but even on a DX2-66, this game is as jerky as a 13-year-old Fiat Panda on a frosty morning. Apart from this small complaint, *Gateworld* offers a mediocre amount of entertainment for your money, but as far as I'm concerned, I think I'll stick to games like *Wolfenstein 3-D*.

[21]

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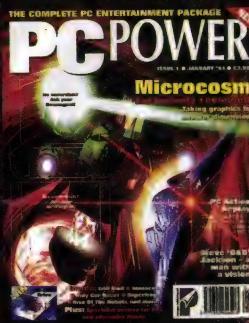
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In this fourth fat issue you'll find masses of interviews as we talk to Cryo about the making of Megarace, Sensible on the making of Cannon Fodder and ODE on Cyberspace. We also plug into the United States to talk to Jane Jensen about Gabriel Knight 2. Not resting there PC Power also puts the latest batch of CD-ROMs under test as well as reporting on TIE Fighter, Megarace, Sim City 2000, Rock-n-Roll Decades, and more!

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In the fifth issue of PC Power, Stuart Wynne travelled to Switzerland to meet H.R. Giger in his own home; we journeyed to Virgin HQ for an in-depth look at the sequel to 7th Guest, Xth Hour and we investigated the latest batch of soundcards. Games reviewed this month included Seawolf, Star Trek: 25th Anniversary, The Elder Scrolls: Arena, Airlines, Award Winners, Player Manager, Fantastic Dizzy and a host more!

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The 6th issue of PC Power proved to be our most informative yet as we included more features than ever before - 20 pages in total. As well as a comprehensive modem guide we also interviewed Lords of Midnight creator Mike Singleton, journeyed to Interplay's US HQ to talk about their up and coming games and revealed Argonaut's BRender to the world. We also featured the world's first review of Bethesda's stunning Delta V.

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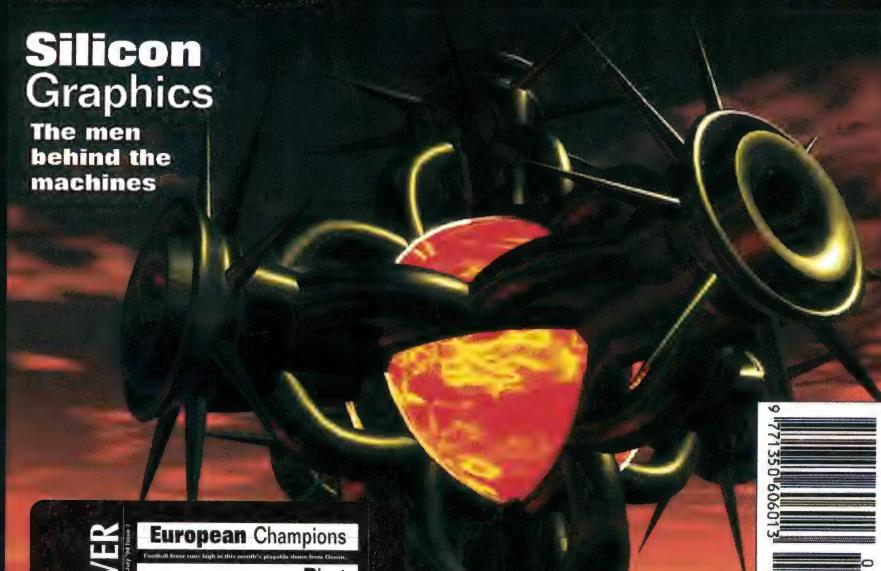
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Clean

Two Competitions. 20 Mega Prizes.

Our competitions are the best. No-one comes close to us when it comes to giving away all manner of luxury items. This month we nose even further ahead of the field. PC Power brings you the chance to win both a superior CD repair kit and a top flight joystick. Don't you dare turn over this page!



CD-MOT

When CDs were first seen in this country, they were being pushed as the indestructible alternative to vinyl. BBC's Tomorrow's World programme showed this revolutionary recording medium being scratched by glass, covered in honey and then played in an audio CD player. But now we know CDs aren't indestructible, and are just as prone to damage from dirt, dust and scratches as vinyl records are. A standard audio CD is scanned at 44.4MHz, so even the tiniest scratch will effect performance. However, a new cleaning and repair system can take even the most damaged CD and bring it back to life. It's called Bundeé's CD3.

Bundeé's CD3 comes complete with three bottles of special fluid, lint-free cloths and full instructions for use. The first bottle cleans the surface of the disc and any imperfections that have appeared on it. Bottle two fills these imperfections with an optical filler that carries the same properties as the original CD, therefore no quality of the original product (be it audio, video or CD-ROM data) is lost. The last bottle coats the CD with a protective, anti-static covering. Each kit can clean and repair up to 50 CDs, so you're not going to run out of fluid in a hurry.

The CD3 system works on audio, video or computer CD-ROMs and is used by jukebox companies to repair and restore their CDs, as well as by many commercial radio stations. It is available from specialist hi-fi and car audio retailers, or by mail order on 0895-436-078.

Each kit costs £14.95, but PC Power have grabbed 10 kits to give away to you, our lucky readers. All you have to do is answer the three questions below correctly, and then send in your answers on a postcard (or stuck-down envelope) to: The MOT for your CD Comp, PC Power, Paragon Publishing, Durham House, 124 Old Christchurch Road, Bournemouth, Dorset. BH1 1NF. Entries should arrive no later than 12th August, 1994. The editor's decision is final.

(1) What do the initials 'CD' stand for?

- (a) Continuity Device
- (b) Compact Data
- (c) Compact Disc

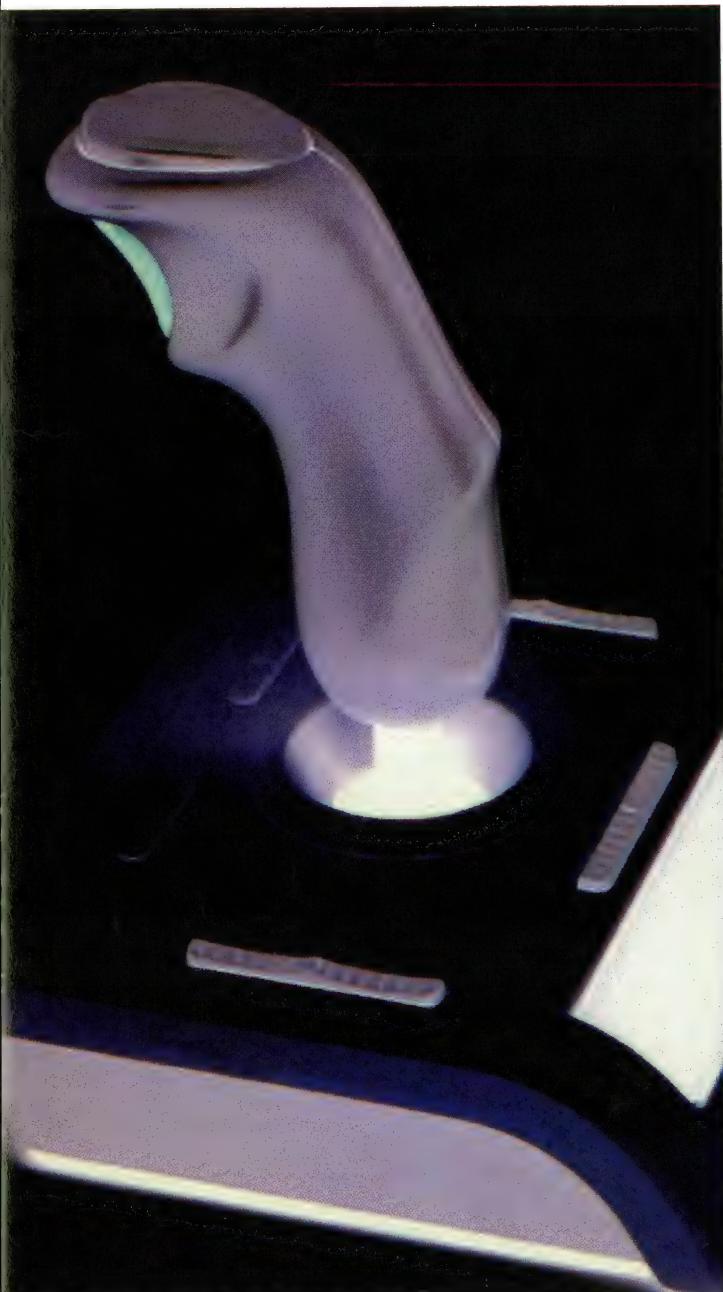
(2) Who invented the CD?

- (a) Sony
- (b) Phillips
- (c) Amstrad

(3) What is the sampling rate for a standard CD audio player?

- (a) 10,000 Mhz
- (b) 14.4 Mhz
- (c) 44.4 Mhz

Up



FLYING HIGH

Suncom Technologies are continually designing new and innovative controllers to make playing your games more fun. From the early days of the Atari 2600 console (hands up if you're old enough to remember that glorious games machine. That many? Okay, you can put your hands down now) through to today's Pentium based PCs, Suncom controllers have been in the hands of millions of players throughout the world. Whether you enjoy simulation, sports, action or role-playing games, Suncom have a controller designed with your enjoyment in mind. They've even introduced the world's most advanced gamecard for PC-to-joystick interfacing.

At the heart of Suncom's success lies its 'human factor' engineering concept. Each design is created with the needs of the user in mind. This provides the end-user with a comfortable, long-lasting controller with up-to-the-minute design. Many people use Suncom controllers today, and more will follow in the future, with the release of their new PC joystick, the FlightMAX.

This unique joystick uses an advanced drive mechanism called the 'Saturn Ring' which includes full 360 degree tracking to provide the most accurate control you'll ever find in a PC joystick. Not only does the joystick controller itself set new standards for PC joysticks, it also comes complete with on-board rudder and throttle controls that can be used in popular simulators such as Microsoft's *Flight Sim 5*. Never again will you have to fumble for the keyboard while flying around; all the necessary controls will be at your fingertips. The FlightMAX control console retails for just £39.99 (inc. VAT), but we have 10 of these wonderful joysticks to give away to the winners of our competition. If you are unlucky enough to miss out, you can still get a special deal direct from Suncom. If you phone Suncom and order a FlightMAX direct from them on 0285-642-211 and mention this competition and PC Power, Suncom will not only give you free postage and packing, they'll also knock 10% off the retail price.

To win one of the 10 FlightMAX joysticks on offer, all you have to do is answer the three questions below correctly and send your entry, on a card or envelope, to: FLYING HIGH Comp, PC Power, Paragon Publishing, Durham House, 124 Old Christchurch Road, Bournemouth, Dorset. BH1 1NF. Entries have to be in our office by the 12th August, 1994 and the big boss's decision is well and truly final.

(1) Which one of the following is another Suncom PC joystick?

- (a) Joystick Pro**
- (b) Night Force**
- (c) PC Fighter**

(2) What is the revolutionary tracking device in the FlightMAX called?

- (a) Saturn Ring**
- (b) Jupiter Ring**
- (c) Uranus Ring**

(3) What extra controls come with the FlightMAX?

- (a) Throttle, Eject and Wing Flaps**
- (b) Throttle, X/Y trims and a cigarette holder**
- (c) Throttle, Rudder and X/Y trims**

Dead Letter Box

**Located somewhere near
the dead-centre of the
Fantasy Zone is Mister
Grimm's graveyard. He's
read all the scrolls, played
all the games and he
knows all of those secrets
which could save your life.**



KGB
I recently bought *KGB* from Virgin and have enjoyed it so far. I discovered the bodies in the meat locker and then I was captured by Verto and his men in his apartment. Yet I can get no further after escaping from the locked room and knocking out Verto when he returns.
Lucy Miller, Maidstone.



Open	Walk to	Use	Walk to
Close	Pick up	Look at	spyglass
Push	Talk to	Turn on	cannon ball
Pull	Give	Turn off	flint

↑	skull
→	head of the navigator
↓	necklace on navigator
←	necklace on bodyguard

Here is the sequence of events that you must follow in the flat. Once you wake up, examine the table and destroy the bugging device which you'll find there. When Rita shows up, don't tell her anything. Once the American arrives tell him to let the girl go. Listen to the conversation behind the door then show the bug to the American.

Look at the bell and then explain to the American that he should try and set off the alarm. Once the alarm goes off, Verto will leave the flat. That will allow you to talk to the girl. Tell Rita that you will take her to the drugs and she will open the door. Being the underhand swine that you are, you will now be able to attack her and let the American leave. Take everything from the living room drawer and the studio, including the Polaroid camera. Take a picture of the white sheet of paper and examine it carefully. Hide behind the door and attack Verto when he returns. Search the body and take the blue piece of paper. Photograph the blue paper and then examine the photo. Return the paper to the body then leave the apartment. Return to Department P and talk to Galushkin. The answers you must give to the subsequent questions are:- Leningrad, Ladoga Park, 3p.m. and August 16, 1991. Do all

of that correctly and you'll be sent to Leningrad.

Can I make a suggestion? If you are going to Leningrad, take some soft toilet paper and some Levi's with you, as that seems to be the thing to do. I wonder if there is any connection between those two items?

Police Quest 3 - The Kindred

Help! After what seems like years of hard graft, I am finding it totally impossible to get through day five on *Police Quest 3*. Once in my office there is the usual note in my basket, and I overhear someone say, "I might have to work this out on that darn computer". I've tried using the computer, but I can't seem to do anything. Please can you help me Grimm, old mate, old pal?

Alan Marsh, Warrington.

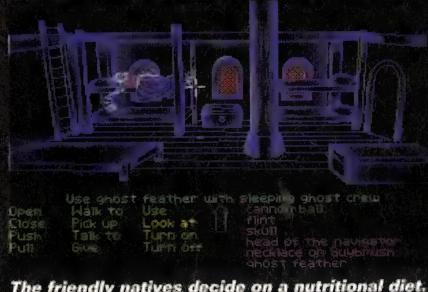
Goodness, using a computer isn't difficult. Once you have figured out the difference between expanded, extended and virtual memory it's really easy, but then I expect you know all that. Being a typical mortal you didn't tell me exactly where you are stuck and I can't give you the complete actions for day five as it would cover two full pages. You do have to use the computer



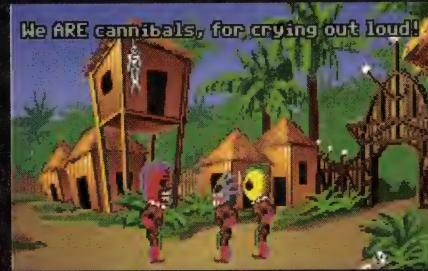
Monkey Island: Use the dead navigator's head...



...to lead you to LeChuck's ghostly pirate ship.



The friendly natives decide on a nutritional diet.



in the Police Station, but not straight away. First, you must pick up the tracker device from the Head Technician (it's in one of the desk drawers). Use a black and white patrol car to take you to the court. If you have filled in Form 900 correctly you are ready to win the case. Once you have been to the Oak Tree Shopping Mall and the Alley, then you will return to the station and use the computer – and this is how you do it.

Turn on the computer and go to the Homicide section. Create a new file (199144) and remember the number. Go to the ground floor and into the Evidence Lockup. Put the samples from the Alley in one and a time and give the case number you just created.

Secret of Monkey Island

I have got as far as finding LeChuck's ghost ship and I know that the anti-ghost root is in one of the chests. How do I actually get the root out of the chest? I guess that I have to get tools from the tools room on deck, but I cannot stop the door squealing. Can you help please? I have tried everything without success. I guess I have to find oil from somewhere, but I can't seem to find anything that would help.

Richard Mills, Southampton.

It's not oil that you are looking for – it's grease. In LeChuck's cabin use the magnetic compass that Stan gave you on the key on the wall. Go back on deck, then down the hatch into the Livestock Room and pick up the ghost feather before returning to the Crew's Quarters. Use the ghost feather on the ghost's feet to get the jug of grog which he's holding. Return to the Livestock Room and use the key on the hatch. Keep the rats at bay by pouring grog in the bowl. Pick up the vat of cooking grease. Now you can return to the squeaky door and use the grease on it.

The Dark Half

In *The Dark Half*, how do I get into the office? George Stark has locked himself in there and is writing a book which I have to stop him doing. I feel you need to use a crowbar, but I do not have enough money for that.

Ben Lawson, Bournemouth.

Sorry, but I've never heard of this game. I've searched through all of the tomes in the library and I've consulted many bulletin boards, but it does not appear anywhere. All I can do is appeal on your behalf to your fellow readers to send me whatever info they have and I'll pass it on.

Crusaders of the Dark Savant

As I'm having trouble with things that go 'Aaaaargh in the night', I figure that you are just the man(?) to give me some help. I am playing *Crusaders of the Dark Savant* from Sir-tech and I need a clue. I am in a strange clearing where I am informed that there is an eerie presence. I don't know what it is, or what I am supposed to do about it. So what do you suggest?

M. Hall, Rochester.

Well, if you will stand around in dark clearings I'm not surprised that you have a few eerie surprises. You should definitely avoid this practice around London's Kings Cross region or you'll get more than you bargained for. I think I know where you are, and what you should do next. I trust you have the Necro Helm in your knapsack, for that is the object you need. Wait until nightfall, don the helm, and you will now be able to see that which was previously invisible. As I recall you will be confronted by some rather nasty characters, so be prepared to put up a fight.

Indiana Jones and the Fate of Atlantis

I may not look it but I am the one person standing between hundreds of Nazi stormtroopers and the fate of Democracy. In which case I suggest you pay attention and give me some serious help. I am inside an Aztec pyramid and I am looking at a sealed tomb covered in strange carvings. I have my beautiful assistant with me who is supposed to offer useful



That must be their HEADQUARTERS...

Virgin's Beneath A Steel Sky. Tony Gilbert (see below) has come a cropper with a gnashing spider.

suggestions but needless to say she is totally, blooming useless. How do I open this tomb?

Harrison Ford's Dad!

Your beautiful assistant performs a very useful service at this point. Get Sophia to keep Charles busy while you nip outside and pinch the kerosene lamp from his stall. Return to the tomb, open the lamp and pour the kerosene onto the carvings. You'll find that this will have loosened the dirt and the carving will now come off in your hand. Use the carving as a lever on the elephant hand sculpture on the wall and things will start getting interesting.

Beneath a Steel Sky.

Being interested in adventures and Cyberpunk, I purchased *Beneath a Steel Sky* from Virgin Software. I think it's a pretty good game and initially found the puzzles relatively straightforward. I have however come to a crunch point – quite literally – because I am being devoured by a spider with gnashing teeth. I foolishly climbed down a hole in the floor of the wine-cellars and found myself in a dark subway. I have searched this place from end to end and all I can find is instant death in the shape of the spider. I suspect I should have previously found some useful object to get me out of this situation, but now I am in the subway I can't climb out again to search anew. Can you tell me what objects I should have with me, or what I should do now?

Tony Gilbert, Chatham.

Don't be downhearted. You are not alone. This problem is proving to be the big sticking point with lots of players and they are queuing up for help with it. You are correct that you are going to need something special to get you out, but that's not the real problem. Before you boldly entered where angels fear to tread, you should have picked up a light bulb from the Power Room. The next thing you need to know is, 'where to stick it'. In the room containing the gruesome spider there are two electric cables to be seen. If you minutely examine one of the cables you'll find a light socket that is approximately one pixel wide. Pop in your light bulb and all will be revealed.

If you have a query concerning an adventure or role playing game, feel free to write to:-

Dead Letter Box, PC Power, Paragon Publishing, Durham House, 124 Old Christchurch Rd, Bournemouth BH1 1NF.

e x p o s u r e

World Cup '94
PUBLISHER: US Gold
CONTACT: 021-625-3388
DEVELOPER: Titex

RELEASE DATE: June
PRICE: £32.99
MINIMUM SPEC: 386 or higher;
VGA.



World Cup '94



US Gold are quietly confident with their entry into the computer gaming industry's own footy tournament. Dino Boni asks himself "Do I like that?".

If any of our readers are still feeling upset and angry at England's failure to make it into the World Cup, I suggest that you stop reading now. The following two pages are full of details regarding this prestigious event; an event that England's football team and her entire nation will not be a part of (sniff).

Every four years, the nations of the world compete for places in the World Cup, the most coveted trophy in the entire world of football. The preliminary matches decide the final line-up of the World Cup tournament, and if your country is unlucky enough to have a diseased-mollusc (surely you mean root vegetable - ed) for a

manager, then you'll lose all your games and won't be able to get into the finals. Of course, if you're the host nation, then you qualify automatically, even if you can't play football (or should I say soccer) to save your life. (Enough of the sob-story. Get on with it - ed.) US Gold have taken pity on English football fans, and have produced a game that will let them take part in an electronic version of the World Cup, without the interference of deranged, foul-mouthed managers.

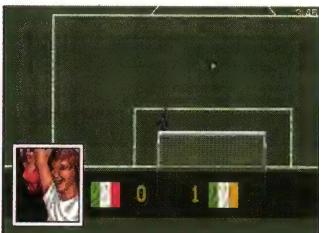
Anyway, back to the game. World Cup '94 is a football sim based around the tournament of the same name. The Americans, always on the look-out to make a quick buck, have designed a mascot for the tournament called Striker. This cartoon dog features heavily in the game, and only US Gold have the express permission to use him in this way. US Gold are privileged indeed.

The game is split into three main sections, and you can either choose to play in the World Cup, play a friendly match or start a practise game. The Tournament mode has some interesting features included in it that

make it stand apart from other games of this type. Each of the teams can be set to either be computer or player controlled. It is therefore possible to have as many human players as you like competing for the Cup; an ideal situation if you want to involve your friends in a tournament. The teams who have qualified for the World Cup can also be changed, so you can include some that didn't make it into the real finals. For instance, you could right the alleged wrongs of the qualifying rounds, if you so desired, and replace the Dutch team with poor old England.

Individual options

Once you have selected your teams, the tournament starts. The entire game is icon driven, and all the icons feature Striker, who bears a striking resemblance to Droopy, in various poses. Each game is displayed as a screen-full of data and icons which only become really useful if your team are playing in that specific match. There are three sets of options, one for each team and one set of global options, so each player can customise the game to suit themselves e.g. one





player may want to have the 'sticky-ball' option (where the ball sticks to your player's feet, thus making the game easier) turned on, while the other player may want it turned off. Using two sets of options creates a more varied scope for playability in two player games, and is a welcome addition to this game.

Smooth scrolling

After the options have been set to your requirements, it's time for the kick-off. After the coin-toss to decide who gets to kick-off first, the action starts with little warning. The player sprites are quite large and easily seen on the screen, and the pitch scrolls around so smoothly that you'll be looking inside your PC for a hidden games console. PCs are very bad at producing smooth scrolling, especially full-screen scrolling, so the guys at Titex must've had their brainy-caps on the day they wrote the scrolling routines. Control is via the keyboard or a joystick, with the latter being the preferred controller. The two fire buttons control passing and shooting and their function changes depending upon whether you are in possession of the

ball. The computer-controlled goalies are tough to beat. In fact, they're so tough many players will become disillusioned with their skills. You can make the goalies player controlled, if you want to increase the number of goals scored in two player games.

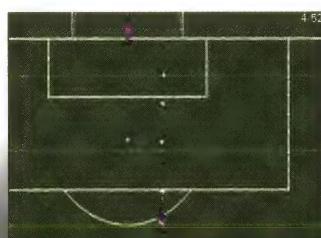
The game supports the Aftertouch system, where it is possible to bend a shot as you make it. This requires a bit of practise to master, but is well worth the effort. You can score some stunning goals with it. At any time during the game, you can call up the 'in-play' options screen. This is limited to a few options, but all of them will be used at one time or other. The customary 'radar' can be turned on or off from here, but you can also use this menu to change your player's

formation, make a substitution or watch an instant replay. Set-pieces are included in the game, but US Gold are currently trying to decide whether or not to include an editor for these increasingly common tactical plays. The most likely result will be to give the player as many choices as they can fit onto the installation disks.

Editor

The most impressive part of the game, however, is the editing section. Using this, you can change anything about a team, from the formation they play in right down to the colour of their skin. The formation editor is especially pleasing, allowing you to set up individual players' positions depending on where the ball is on the

As you can see, Striker, the World Cup mascot, features heavily in the game, mostly depicted in the icons. He also pops up in a few animations.

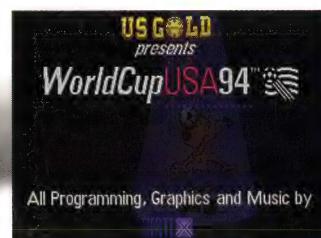


pitch. The pitch is split into nine zones, and each player has a set number of positions relative to which zone the ball is in, and which side has the ball. You can even make a player stay in one place if you so wish. Each formation can be saved to disk for later use, or you can try it out against another team straight away on the practise ground.

The developers have produced this game with one thing foremost in their minds; ease of use. They have written a game which they hope anyone will be able to play, no matter what their football gaming experience.

If only the real thing was so simple...

● DINO BONI





KICK

YOU know

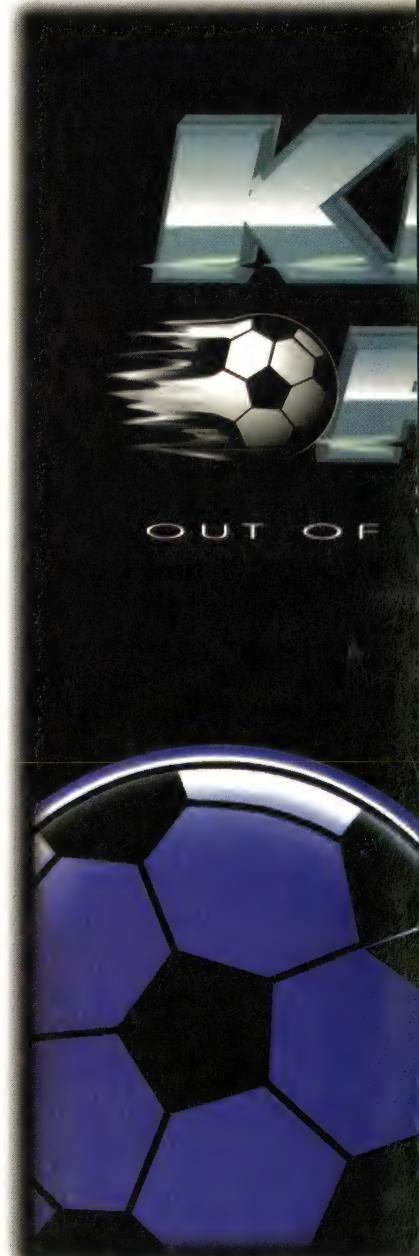


it's...

International action at its dazzling best. The atmosphere is electric as the stage is set for the World's best players to display their awesome skills. **KICK OFF 3** is a game for the true soccer fan. Top footballing Nations from 5 continents battle for soccer's biggest prize - The World Cup. Thrill to the one touch football of the South Americans, the power play of the North Europeans and the skillful yet eccentric African nations. Stamp your authority on the match using the key players within the team. Each country has its own style play dependent on the way these players are used. Be sure to play to your team's strengths. Use

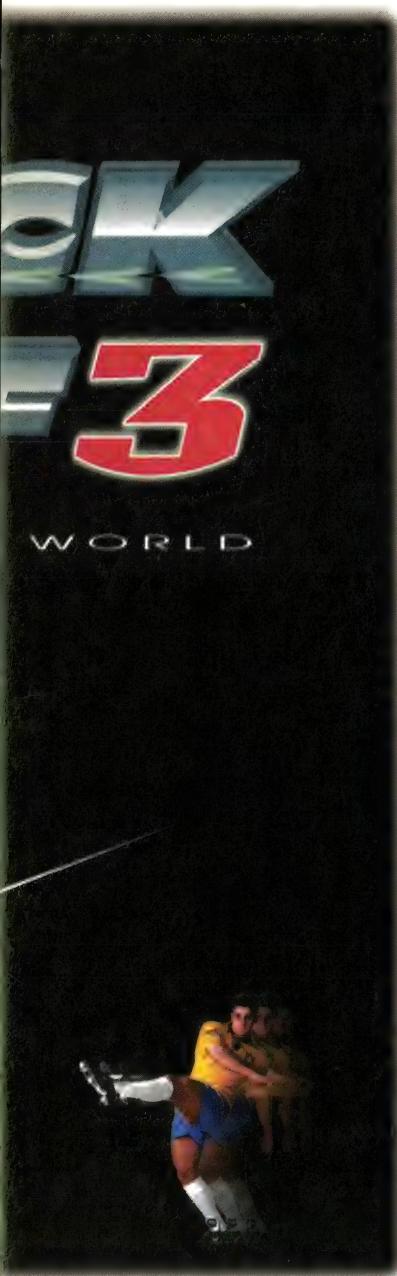


PC COMPATIBLES



CD32 PC & COMPATIBLES PC CD ROM

© Copyright 1994 Anco Games. Published by Anco Software Ltd, Unit 7, Millside



the Brazilian Playmakers to split the opposition with pinpoint passes or the German Sweeper to build from the back. Play the ball to the dashing full backs from Cameroon or release the flying Dutch Wingers.



PC COMPATIBLES

KICK OFF 3 is packed full of dynamic features that set it apart from any other football game.

Over 2000 frames of animation for smooth, fast flowing International action and multi directional pitch scrolling. Thirty different **SET PLAYS** for corners and free kicks give the most dramatic dead ball situations ever. A practice mode allows you to specialise dribbling, overhead

kicks, volleys, flicks, diving headers and the deadly **AFTER TOUCH**. Switch your tactics and your side's style of play with a **TEAM TALK** at the right time. Speed and ball control options give instant playability for novice and master gamer alike. Soccer realism with Match facts, a Man of the Match award, action replays, all the latest soccer laws and much more.

kickin'

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ANCO

Impressed

Dear Dave,

The Giger interview in issue 5 had to be the best piece of prose that I have ever come across in a PC magazine. Stuart Wynne really seemed to get to the heart and soul of the man and I really liked the line – “We are all executioners, but only in the mind.” I’ll admit that I’ve always had my doubts about the man – any one who can draw such disturbing images must surely be slightly loopy, but now I know I was wrong. The man seemed like a pussy cat, wouldn’t hurt anyone, and seemed to be genuinely upset at the suggestion that he could or would. It gave me something to think about – never judge someone by their cover! Thanks a lot.

The other reason I’m writing is to ask whether it would be possible for you to do something on the internet, and on modems in general. I can use Compuserve and have worked my way around the Underworld, but the net itself seems impossible to get into. It just doesn’t make any sense at all – why can’t it have a proper windows type thingy like Compuserve – or is it supposed to be difficult to keep the uninitiated like myself from getting in? Maybe there’s something going on that we don’t know about!

Finally, thanks for a great magazine. Some bits need tightening up – mainly your hardware stuff – but, overall, I think you’ve got the market sussed. Keep it going – if only because I’ve just taken out a subscription!

John Williams, Cardiff

Thanks a lot for your support John. The Giger feature was top, even if we say so ourselves. Stuart is a seasoned journalist and has long had a fascination for all things bizarre, so when the opportunity arose for someone to do the interview, Stuart was the ideal choice – even if he did take 10 years to write the thing, and grumbled incessantly about how much he was paid for it (nothing)!

As for the Internet – it’s something that we’re looking into and will be covered in depth in the not so dim and distant future. Last month you’ll know that we did a modem feature – and covered the main areas of contact – Compuserve, etc. We didn’t delve into the Internet for the simple reason that it will take a good three to four pages just to provide the user with an adequate frame of reference to be able to use the thing properly. Apparently there’s no-one that you can ring for technical support – simply because no-one takes responsibility for it. It’s an off-spring of JANET – Joint Academic Network – which links schools, colleges and universities throughout the world, and seems to have grown without any central planning – just to make our lives easy!

Finally, our hardware features are going to improve (not that they weren’t brilliant anyway). We’ve brought in Tony Kaye – who has written for many a fat, deadly serious PC magazine – who, along with our very own Dino Boni – should make PC Power the most informed magazine of them all.

Competition

Dear Dave,

I’m not normally one to grumble but I’m getting fed up with the number of PC magazines vying for space on the stands on WH Smiths. It’s not that I have to put them out (I work there!) but that there are simply too many of them – all promising

Letters the Word

Write to: Dave Westley, The Word, PC Power, Durham House, 124 Old Christchurch Rd, Bournemouth, BH1 1NF.

exclusives which, let’s be honest, none of them ever get. The Next Month page, especially, seems to have become silly – everyone puts down games which the next issue fails to review – why is this?

PC Power is my current favourite (though I confess to being fickle – and with so much choice who’d blame me) but even you suffer from the exclusive syndrome. I’ve got every single one of your issues and every month I look at the last page to see what’s coming out. Rarely, if ever, do you get it right.

A magazine’s push for an exclusive also seems to mean that they review products way before they come out – your Megarace review is an example. The result is that people have often forgotten about the game by the time the thing makes it to the shop!

I understand that you want to have things a little early, but the present situation pushes it a little too far, don’t you think?

Ian Short, Burnby

“With the exception of DOTT, every CD-ROM game I’ve bought so far has been tosh, so I’ve gone back to floppy.”

Well, believe it or not, Ian, it’s not really our fault – software publishers often give us release dates that often don’t actually tally with when their products are released. It’s not really their fault either – they can only go by the dates given by the developers who, in turn, suffer as everyone else does, by unforeseen set backs. The Next Month page is essentially a provisional release schedule for the month ahead. At the ECTS last month, for example, we were told we’d have Outpost in for review – it didn’t happen. We’ve been promised that the game will be in for review next month, though...

The push for exclusives is inevitable in a market as competitive as this one is – all the magazines are looking for an angle to make you buy theirs and no one else’s, something extremely difficult to do when every magazine out there is very good. We just hope that our all-round loveliness, expertise, wit and wisdom, value for money, brilliance and honesty shine through above the rest(!).

Finally, your point about there being too many magazines out there – I couldn’t agree more. I think a couple of them should disappear – it’d make our life an awful lot easier!

Edutainment

Dear Dave,

Thank you for a brilliant mag – we (my six year old daughter and I) get it every month and really enjoy reading it together. Your reviews are always amusing and informed and I like your Full Power at the side – quite why no-one has copied it I don’t know – people usually steal the good ideas.

The reason I’m writing is that the features I’ve found most informative in PC Power are the ones on edutainment. My daughter learns the most from these ‘games’ – the Mario ones are excellent – especially the way the child is made to feel good if she gets something right.

What we really want to know is who else makes edutainment products and which ones are good. We only know of The Software Toolworks – does anyone else produce them?

Susie West, Glasgow

Well it’s good news – everyone is getting into edutainment. SCOPS and Mindscape/The Software Toolworks are the two leading companies at the moment, but Electronic Arts are jumping onto the bandwagon, and many other companies are said to be thinking about it. Actual products also look very good. I saw some of SCOPS’ material at ECTS and it looked very impressive indeed. Next month we hope to do a big feature – and we’ll tell you everything you need to know then.

CD-hell

Dear Dave,

I joined the CD-ROM revolution a couple of months ago and I’m writing to warn other readers not to make the same mistakes that I made. As a final year student (who owes £3,000 to the bank) I couldn’t afford to buy a double speed drive and so opted for a single speed one – a disastrous mistake. With a transfer rate of 150kb/s, playing games proved a tortuous experience with hideous stops and starts in a game completely ruining it.

I then did a foolish thing – so tormented a soul was I after having spent over £200 on games that I couldn’t play, I invested in a dual speed drive. I’d expected that the games would automatically become brilliant – how wrong I was. People are always saying that a CD-ROM is basically a very slow hard disk – I learned that fact the hard way. With the exception of DOTT, all of the CD-ROM games I have bought to date have been tosh and I’ve gone back to floppy. When quad speed drives emerge, perhaps I’ll rethink my view towards CD-ROM. Until then I advise everyone to stay away from this slow, irritating medium.

John Smithard, Durham

It’s true to say that CD-ROM is a slow medium, but if a game is specifically designed for it, then the problems can be got around. The simple truth is that most companies are now committed to CD-ROM – and things will improve as a result. If I were you I wouldn’t turn your back on the medium so soon. By this Christmas I reckon the Virginics of this world will have published some stunning games for you to play...

‘the Word’ is sponsored by...



The Fantasy Zone

They seek him here, they seek him there... But they are all wasting their time, for mystery man Mitch has gone to the weird and wonderful world of Watford, in search of a fantastic bargain. Rude comics, life size cardboard cut outs of Star Trek stars - you name it, it can all be found amongst the debris of The Fantasy Zone.

A short walk, followed by the swift exchange of money (ouch!) and I was in. I have a theory that there is a mysterious race of beings who inhabit specialist exhibitions. Whenever I turn up at Fantasy Fairs, Computer Exhibitions or Movie Conventions, these beings appear as if by magic. Weighed down with plastic carrier bags, heads sprouting the kind of hair which sneers at garden shears, and eyes peering out from behind glasses which could assume the duties of the Hubble Telescope at a moment's notice, this lost tribe pack the aisles and generally get in the way of the more important personages – namely me. I glanced around for a mirror as I always do on these occasions, to check that I didn't really look like one of them. How I was looking? I was looking good! Reassured, I kicked a few of the poor unfortunates out of my way and swept onwards. A few yards further on I spotted another mirror. How was I looking now? I was still looking good! I decided to forget about my fears and set about finding out what it was that had brought over one hundred stall-holders and countless punters to this 'Fair at the End of the Universe'.

It's a truism that, 'The only difference between men and boys, is the cost of their toys'. Well, both the men and the boys appeared to have turned out in force, and all of them seemed to be determined to bend their flexible friend until it snapped. (Err... Perhaps I should elaborate on that to explain that I'm talking about credit cards.)

There are certain areas of interest that dominate all fantasy fairs. Love them or hate them, Star Trek, Doctor Who and Star Wars form the main part of such events and their memorabilia are heaped on every other stall. Now I'll try and behave myself, but let's face it, only someone who is two parsecs short of a light year could claim that Star Trek isn't past its sell by date, and should be decently buried. However as usual there were still droves of would-be Trekkies queuing up to shell out heavy folding money to own their own (working model?) of a Star Trek phaser gun. As our pointy-eared friend might say, 'It's quite illogical Captain.' One amusing manifestation of this lunacy was a stall selling life-size cardboard cut-outs of the crew. For a mere £20 you can take home your own James T. Kirk and have him stand around in your bedroom impressing your friends and keeping the tribbles at bay. I suppose you could even tell your friends that it is the actual Captain himself, acting out one of the episodes, because let's face it, how would they tell the difference? If you are interested, (and not ashamed to admit it) then you can buy your own six-foot Klingon by mail order from:- America Mania (tel 0494-472-775).

I quickly side-stepped the Trek stalls in case someone managed to take any photographs of me looking interested, and headed rapidly towards a corner of the hall that was festooned with movie posters. If you are looking for something to hide that pizza stain on your bedroom wall then, look no further. Large colourful posters covering every movie you could ever think of were on sale, plus some pretty extraordinary ones from overseas which would make a stoker blush. The scenes depicted on some Spanish and Italian cinema posters are pretty shocking. Have you noticed how often half-naked females feature in Fantasy artwork. I suppose that's why it's called fantasy. Aliens, vampires and mad scientists all come as part of a set with large-breasted, nubile women. (Incidentally 'nubile' means 'marriageable' which is not half as exciting as I always imagined!)

This month an intriguing piece of paper fluttered through the paper-thin barrier that separates the real world from that other place and landed in my In-Tray. It was a flyer advertising a Fantasy Fair that was being held at Watford and it promised me everything from Aliens to Zombies. Having an interest in one, and editor who was another, I decided to investigate.

As anyone from a cultured background (like wot I am) knows, Watford exists at the very edge of the known world. One false move around this point and you will disappear into the endless darkness that exists to the north of London. It was therefore an act of bravery on my part that made me point the Fantasy Zone's rusty transporter in the direction of the Watford area and press the energise button.

Upon materialising at the infamous Gap I found to my surprise that it was bustling with hundreds of other brave souls who had also decided to risk life and limb, so, slightly reassured, I set off to find the Watford Leisure Centre, where I had been informed a giant Movie and Fantasy Fair was taking place.



Young ladies whose clothes have all dropped off because they are being terrorised by zombies seemed to be a popular theme, which may be farcical, but you've got to admit that it still brings us sniffing around. It's humiliating to confess it, but no matter how smart we think we are, we are slaves to old Mother Nature. When you consider how much you would pay for a normal poster from your local high street, these conversation stoppers are a snip. One source of such posters is The Cinema Store, 46 Monmouth Street, Covent Garden, London WC2H 9EP (071-379-7838).

I suppose that while we have the cellar door open on our basic instincts, now might be the time to mention that there is a large section of the fair devoted to selling comics, and some of those are definitely of an adult nature. If ever the word fantasy could be applied to anything it fits in with some of these mucky mags. I of course have never bought any, but I think you'll find that "Horny Tales" are the ones you are looking for!

Model Makers.

I have never been a model-maker myself, but my understanding of the fascination was that hobbyists got their kicks from doing the actual assembling and painting themselves. For this reason I was a little surprised to see so many stalls doing a roaring trade selling model kits that were fully painted and mounted. The stallkeepers confirmed that business was brisk, and punters of all ages were buying their aliens, spaceships and monsters fully completed and ready for displaying. In fact there were a number of model makers advertising their services for commissions. So if you can't paint for toffee, and all your own attempts look like something out of the MFI catalogue (Made For Idiots!), then there are experts who'll do the whole thing for you. Whether you want to do it yourself, or buy things



A trader looks on enviously as an eager punter descends upon a third edition, Swedish hand-illustrated copy of Dr Who and the Daleks.



Think of a sad sci-fi series, any sci-fi series, multiply it by 12,000 and you get some idea of the merchandise at this fair.

ready made, you can obtain a large catalogue of the many hundreds of models on the market by contacting: Fiction and Fantasy Models, Mail Order Dept. 1346 High Road, London N20 9HJ (081-445-8886)

Manga Mania.

Manga is a catch-all word covering Japanese comics and animated cartoon videos featuring super-hero teenagers. If you are a Manga fan then the fair has loads of products that would interest you. You may reasonably ask yourself, why would grown-up and supposedly intelligent males be interested in watching cartoon videos which at first glance look like "Scooby Doo Vs the Yellow Peril"? The reason is that these videos feature fast action super-heroes who do battle with aliens and demons that are hell-bent on enslaving the earth. There is lots of violence, and the artwork is filled with extravagant special effects. Oh yes, I forgot to mention that every few minutes they also indulge in bouts of oral sex and mass orgies. Yup, it's the old sex and violence theme which has caught our attention again. I assume that whatever censorship laws normally apply to live action films have been circumvented by using cartoon characters, and that's why scenes which normally wouldn't be passed in a movie, slip through in cartoon form. Fair enough, I won't complain, but I am fascinated to see that the Japanese draw doe-eyed, American-style co-eds as their objects of desire instead of Oriental girls... To my mind these fantasy females look a bit like - 'Bambi with Boobs'. Something deep and naughty in the subconscious there I think lads. However, if you want to augment your collection of Manga videos and comics with models of the characters featured in the action, then these too are available at the fairs. It would appear that outside Japan it can be very difficult to obtain the latest Manga offerings, in fact it can be up to two years before they are available in the West. One

company who endeavours to import the most up to date models is: Venus Inc, 1 Perry Close, Uxbridge, Middlesex, England (Tel 0895-444-839 after 6pm).

These self-assembly females (no, they are not inflatable!) can be purchased for around £30+. Give them a ring and they'll do their best to get you what you want. I only hope they deliver in plain brown wrappers or your grey-haired old mum will have a fit. A word of warning to my faithful readers. Japanese men spend a lot of time with products such as these and you only need to glance at their eyes to see the inherent dangers. So think on!

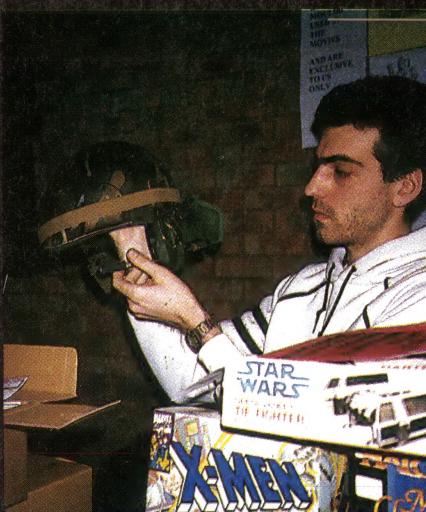
Bookworms.

On the whole, fantasy enthusiasts are not as daft as others might think. They may have their little foibles and eccentricities, but I would hazard a guess that they are more intelligent and literate than the norm. No doubt for this reason book stalls form a large part of fantasy fairs. Granted, there are as many books devoted to Doctor Who and UFOs as there are to beautiful artwork and



This is THE place for that important poster of a scantily-clad woman.

"I am fascinated to see that the Japanese draw doe-eyed, American co-eds as their objects of desire. These fantasy females look like Bambi with Boobs. Something deep and naughty in the subconscious there I think, lads."



Hmmm, yes, it's a fine example of - err, well I don't know what it is, but I'm sure it will bring him hours of unending pleasure.

learned tomes, but we still like our books, even if it's only to look at the pictures. Full colour books devoted to vampire movies, plus volumes of trivia covering science fiction, are heaped upon the trestles, and if that isn't good enough there are specialised bookshops on hand who will find that rare book you have been searching for. 'At the Sign of the Dragon' is one such shop which boasts a huge computer database of specialised science fiction, fantasy books and magazines. They both buy and sell second hand items and they claim they will do their best to find anything you crave for in this field. The owners are dyed-in-the-wool sci-fi enthusiasts themselves, so they generally know what you want before you can half explain what you are looking for. If you can't make it to their shop you can send an S.A.E for their catalogue to 133, Sheen Lane, London SW14 8AE.

As you would imagine, hardly a week goes by when there isn't some kind of fantasy fair taking place. Specialist comic fairs, movie marts and trading card markets are happening up and down the country all the time, so don't waste your time sitting around dreaming of aliens, get up off your butt and go and buy one. If you are interested in visiting a Fantasy Fair and picking up a bargain then there is another taking place at the Watford Leisure Centre, Horseshoe Lane, Garston, Herts. Sunday 26th June 11am-4pm.

Electronic Trading Cards.

Trading cards are big news – well at least they are amongst those of us who have never grown up. Shops sell them in packs, magazines and petrol stations give them away as free gifts, and there are weekend fairs held to enable fans to trade and bargain over their favourite pasteboard photos. Having hundreds of trading cards filling your bedroom cupboards, (while your shirts are stuffed under your bed) is one thing, but what is new, and no doubt to some equally fascinating, is the new fad for computerised cards. Coming to a

bulletin board near you soon are megabytes of fantasy art displayed on trading cards which have never seen a piece of compressed paper. Available now on the Computech Service are oodles of individual trading cards featuring mug shots and scenes from the latest American sci-fi and fantasy TV series. Babylon 5, Deep Space Nine and Superman are typical subjects, and they are all available in thrilling colour for you to swap and trade. Of course if you swap copies of these beauties you still have your original to swap again. Sounds like the sort of trading that even a Klingon would approve of.

Fantasy Art.

A really strange item of interest which I stumbled upon this month was 'The Garden of Unearthly Delights'. The artist William Latham has taken his weird, alien artwork, combined it with haunting music, and stuffed it all onto a CD for you to play with. The idea is similar to the old computer program called Life in which you used the computer to help a basic cell formation to evolve. Whereas in Life, the object was to see if the creation would survive, in the Garden the object is to marvel at the strange and beautiful shapes which are produced. What we have here is an alien's kaleidoscope coupled with haunting electronic music. The software is run under Microsoft Windows and you use the mouse to select which weird growth you wish to see evolve and mutate.

Most of the show is taken up with large static ray-traced shapes, but there are also some twenty animated sequences to gawk at as well. With the CD come a simple pair of red and green lens specs that are used to view some growths which are displayed in 3-D.

It is very hard to quantify the use to which such a CD could be put. If you are interested in high quality computer graphics, or you are in the business of building up a collection of multimedia CDs to amaze and impress friends/students, then this would make a rare conversation piece. The CD can be obtained from Nimbus, Raglan House, Llantarnam Park, Cwmbran, Gwent NP44 3AB (0633-867777) price £25+Vat



The Elder Scrolls

This month I have been spending the wee, small hours of the morning searching the goblin-infested dungeons of *The Elder Scrolls* from US Gold, and I'm still trying to make up my mind what I think of it. I suppose the very fact that I have spent five evenings devoted solely to this game, when there are heaps of other fantasy software still lying unopened in the in-tray, must say something about it. I think it was last year that US Gold also released the identical styled game called *Legends of Valour*; but whereas *Legends* got it nearly all wrong, *The Elder Scrolls* gets it nearly all right. The game allows you to select the level of graphic detail you want, but be warned that only the most powerful PC can handle the higher detail. Even a 486SX 25MHz system must select the lowest graphics available, which feels very insulting when it's your machine. In certain areas of the game (e.g. the towns) everything is very pixelated, verging on crude, but in the darker dungeons you tend not to notice. The good news is that there is a huge playing area, which unlike *Legends of Valour*, you can cope with, and there are loads of interesting weapons and peculiar spells to obtain and cast. The sound is good and the fighting mechanism is satisfying.

I particularly liked the novel method which the game employs to decide what role you will adopt to play the game. Firstly you are asked a set of questions which pose a few simple moral dilemmas. By analysing your answers, the game then decides what your basic character is and assigns you a suitable role. The game digested my answers, hesitated for only a moment, and then informed me that I had been assigned the persona of a double-glazing salesman. Well, no, it didn't really. Actually it decided I was ideal material to become a Battlemage, but I don't like to brag. Apart from the graphics, this RPG has all the ingredients to make a brilliant game. It has the real-time action we want, and it offers a few tables of statistics that the player can use to distribute his/her hard-won experience points. All of this makes an acceptable compromise to suit both the die-hard RPG nut and the mainstream player. Yes, I think I've convinced myself that it is a game which you will enjoy, I'm certainly going to give it another thrashing before I even bother to open anything else.

Remember I am always interested to hear from you, so if you have any comments or suggestions write to me at the following address:

Mitch, The Fantasy Zone, PC Power, Paragon Publishing, Durham House, 124 Old Christchurch Rd, Bournemouth BH1 1NF.

Next month

ID Software have become a household name amongst PC gamers over the past few months. Their epic game, *Doom*, has generated a following that spans the globe.

Championships have been held, network games run day and night in offices everywhere and even other shareware authors have jumped on the bandwagon with a stream of add-on utilities and editors for this classic PC game.

What has this got to do with next month's issue? Well, PC Power will bring you an interview with the creators behind *Doom*, together with a stunning preview of the most anticipated game this year - *Doom 2*.

If this wasn't enough to whet your appetite for the next four weeks, then issue eight of PC Power will also contain the first part of our exclusive 'work-in-progress' report on *Darkseed 2*, where we follow the development of a game from first idea to shop floor.

To round off the issue, look out for reviews of: *Outpost*, *Dragon Lore*, *World Cup '94*, *FIFA Soccer*, *TIE Fighter* and the long awaited *Under a Killing Moon*.

PC Power will grace the shelves of your nearest newsagents again on 14th July with the usual top-notch cover disks and CDs. I'd buy it if I were you.



life after Doom

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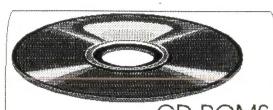
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